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APR 23 1928

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Form L-9-15m-8,'26

NOV 9 1934

JAN 3 1935

JUN - 7 1946

MAY 21 1951

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JUN 1 1962

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THE RELATION  
OF  
LITERATURE TO LIFE

BY  
CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER

15422



NEW YORK AND LONDON  
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS  
1904

1907

BY CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

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## NOTE

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THE paper that gives the title to this volume of essays has not been printed before. The other papers have appeared from time to time in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Century Magazine*, and I desire to express my sincere thanks for the privilege of reproducing them. They have been selected for their general relation to the theme of the title essay, that is to say, the connection between our literary, educational, and social progress. The dates of their first publication are given in explanation of the allusions to passing events.

C. D. W.



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THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO  
LIFE



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## THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO LIFE

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[This paper was prepared and delivered at several of our universities as introductory to a course of five lectures which insisted on the value of literature in common life — some hearers thought with an exaggerated emphasis—and attempted to maintain the thesis that all genuine, enduring literature is the outcome of the time that produces it, is responsive to the general sentiment of its time; that this close relation to human life insures its welcome ever after as a true representation of human nature; and that consequently the most remunerative method of studying a literature is to study the people for whom it was produced. Illustrations of this were drawn from the Greek, the French, and the English literatures. This study always throws a flood of light upon the meaning of the text of an old author, the same light that the reader unconsciously has upon contemporary pages dealing with the life with which he is familiar. The reader can test this by taking up his Shakespeare after a thorough in-

vestigation of the customs, manners, and popular life of the Elizabethan period. Of course the converse is true that good literature is an open door into the life and mode of thought of the time and place where it originated.]

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I HAD a vision once—you may all have had a like one—of the stream of time flowing through a limitless land. Along its banks sprang up in succession the generations of man. They did not move with the stream—they lived their lives and sank away; and always below them new generations appeared, to play their brief parts in what is called history—the sequence of human actions. The stream flowed on, opening for itself forever a way through the land. I saw that these successive dwellers on the stream were busy in constructing and setting afloat vessels of various size and form and rig—arks, galleys, galleons, sloops, brigs, boats propelled by oars, by sails, by steam. I saw the anxiety with which each builder launched his venture, and watched its performance and progress. The anxiety was to invent and launch something that should float on to the generations to come, and carry

the name of the builder and the fame of his generation. It was almost pathetic, these puny efforts, because faith always sprang afresh in the success of each new venture. Many of the vessels could scarcely be said to be launched at all; they sank like lead, close to the shore. Others floated out for a time, and then, struck by a flaw in the wind, heeled over and disappeared. Some, not well put together, broke into fragments in the buffeting of the waves. Others danced on the flood, taking the sun on their sails, and went away with good promise of a long voyage. But only a few floated for any length of time, and still fewer were ever seen by the generation succeeding that which launched them. The shores of the stream were strewn with wrecks; there lay bleaching in the sand the ribs of many a once gallant craft.

Innumerable were the devices of the builders to keep their inventions afloat. Some paid great attention to the form of the hull, others to the kind of cargo and the loading of it, while others—and these seemed the majority—trusted more to some new sort of sail, or new fashion of rudder, or new application of propelling power. And it was wonderful to see what these new ingenuities did for a time, and

how each generation was deceived into the belief that its products would sail on forever. But one fate practically came to the most of them. They were too heavy, they were too light, they were built of old material, and they went to the bottom, they went ashore, they broke up and floated in fragments. And especially did the crafts built in imitation of something that had floated down from a previous generation come to quick disaster. I saw only here and there a vessel, beaten by weather and blackened by time—so old, perhaps, that the name of the maker was no longer legible; or some fragments of antique wood that had evidently come from far up the stream. When such a vessel appeared there was sure to arise great dispute about it, and from time to time expeditions were organized to ascend the river and discover the place and circumstances of its origin. Along the banks, at intervals, whole fleets of boats and fragments had gone ashore, and were piled up in bays, like the drift-wood of a subsided freshet. Efforts were made to dislodge these from time to time and set them afloat again, newly christened, with fresh paint and sails, as if they stood a better chance of the voyage than any new ones. Indeed, I saw that a large part of the commerce

of this river was, in fact, the old hulks and stranded wrecks that each generation had set afloat again. As I saw it in this foolish vision, how pathetic this labor was from generation to generation ; so many vessels launched ; so few making a voyage even for a lifetime ; so many builders confident of immortality ; so many lives outlasting this coveted reputation ! And still the generations, each with touching hopefulness, busied themselves with this child's play on the banks of the stream ; and still the river flowed on, whelming and wrecking the most of that so confidently committed to it, and bearing only here and there, on its swift, wide tide, a ship, a boat, a shingle.

These hosts of men whom I saw thus occupied since history began were authors ; these vessels were books ; these heaps of refuse in the bays were great libraries. The allegory admits of any amount of ingenious parallelism. It is nevertheless misleading ; it is the illusion of an idle fancy. I have introduced it because it expresses, with some whimsical exaggeration—not much more than that of "The Vision of Mirza"—the popular notion about literature and its relation to human life. In the popular conception, literature is as much a

thing apart from life as these boats on the stream of time were from the existence, the struggle, the decay of the generations along the shore. I say in the popular conception, for literature is wholly different from this, not only in its effect upon individual lives, but upon the procession of lives upon this earth; it is not only an integral part of all of them, but, with its sister arts, it is the one unceasing continuity in history. Literature and art are not only the records and monuments made by the successive races of men, not only the local expressions of thought and emotion; but they are, to change the figure, the streams that flow on, enduring, amid the passing show of men, reviving, transforming, ennobling the fleeting generations. Without this continuity of thought and emotion, history would present us only a succession of meaningless experiments. The experiments fail, the experiments succeed—at any rate, they end—and what remains for transmission, for the sustenance of succeeding peoples? Nothing but the thought and emotion evolved and expressed. It is true that every era, each generation, seems to have its peculiar work to do; it is to subdue the intractable earth, to repel or to civilize the barbarians, to settle society in order, to build cities,



to amass wealth in centres, to make deserts bloom, to construct edifices such as were never made before, to bring all men within speaking distance of each other—lucky if they have anything to say when that is accomplished—to extend the information of the few among the many, or to multiply the means of easy and luxurious living. Age after age the world labors for these things with the busy absorption of a colony of ants in its castle of sand.

—And we must confess that the process, such, for instance, as that now going on here—this onset of many peoples, which is transforming the continent of America—is a spectacle to excite the imagination in the highest degree. If there were any poet capable of putting into an epic the spirit of this achievement, what an epic would be his! Can it be that there is anything of more consequence in life than the great business in hand, which absorbs the vitality and genius of this age? Surely, we say, it is better to go by steam than to go afoot, because we reach our destination sooner—getting there quickly being a supreme object. It is well to force the soil to yield a hundred-fold, to congregate men in masses so that all their energies shall be taxed to bring food to themselves, to stimulate industries,

drag coal and metal from the bowels of the earth, cover its surface with rails for swift-running carriages, to build ever larger palaces, warehouses, ships. This gigantic achievement strikes the imagination.

If the world in which you live happens to be the world of books, if your pursuit is to know what has been done and said in the world, to the end that your own conception of the value of life may be enlarged, and that better things may be done and said hereafter, this world and this pursuit assume supreme importance in your mind. But you can in a moment place yourself in relations—you have not to go far, perhaps only to speak to your next neighbor—where the very existence of your world is scarcely recognized. All that has seemed to you of supreme importance is ignored. You have entered a world that is called practical, where the things that we have been speaking of are done; you have interest in it and sympathy with it, because your scheme of life embraces the development of ideas into actions; but these men of realities have only the smallest conception of the world that seems to you of the highest importance; and, further, they have no idea that they owe anything to it, that it has ever influenced their

lives or can add anything to them. And it may chance that you have, for the moment, a sense of insignificance in the small part you are playing in the drama going forward. Go out of your library, out of the small circle of people who talk of books, who are engaged in research, whose liveliest interest is in the progress of ideas, in the expression of thought and emotion that is in literature; go out of this atmosphere into a region where it does not exist, it may be into a place given up to commerce and exchange, or to manufacturing, or to the development of certain other industries, such as mining, or the pursuit of office—which is sometimes called politics. You will speedily be aware how completely apart from human life literature is held to be, how few people regard it seriously as a necessary element in life, as anything more than an amusement or a vexation. I have in mind a mountain district, stripped, scarred, and blackened by the ruthless lumbermen, ravished of its forest wealth, divested of its beauty, which has recently become the field of vast coal-mining operations. Remote from communication, it was yesterday an exhausted, wounded, deserted country. To-day audacious railways are entering it, crawling up its mountain slopes, rounding its

dizzy precipices, spanning its valleys on iron cobwebs, piercing its hills with tunnels. Drifts are opened in its coal seams, to which iron tracks shoot away from the main line; in the woods is seen the gleam of the engineer's level, is heard the rattle of heavily-laden wagons on the newly-made roads; tents are pitched, uncouth shanties have sprung up, great stables, boarding-houses, stores, workshops; the miner, the blacksmith, the mason, the carpenter have arrived; households have been set up in temporary barracks, children are already there who need a school, women who must have a church and society; the stagnation has given place to excitement, money has flowed in, and everywhere are the hum of industry and the swish of the goad of American life. On this hillside, which in June was covered with oaks, is already in October a town; the stately trees have been felled; streets are laid out and graded and named; there are a hundred dwellings, there are a store, a post-office, an inn; the telegraph has reached it, and the telephone and the electric light; in a few weeks more it will be in size a city, with thousands of people—a town made out of hand by drawing men and women from other towns, civilized men and women, who have voluntarily

put themselves in a position where they must be civilized over again.

This is a marvellous exhibition of what energy and capital can do. You acknowledge as much to the creators of it. You remember that not far back in history such a transformation as this could not have been wrought in a hundred years. This is really life, this is doing something in the world, and in the presence of it you can see why the creators of it regard your world, which seemed to you so important, the world whose business is the evolution and expression of thought and emotion, as insignificant. Here is a material addition to the business and wealth of the race, here employment for men who need it, here industry replacing stagnation, here is the pleasure of overcoming difficulties and conquering obstacles. Why encounter these difficulties? In order that more coal may be procured to operate more railway trains at higher speed, to supply more factories, to add to the industrial stir of modern life. The men who projected and are pushing on this enterprise, with an executive ability that would maintain and manœuvre an army in a campaign, are not, however, consciously philanthropists, moved by the charitable purpose of giving employment

to men, or finding satisfaction in making two blades of grass grow where one grew before. They enjoy no doubt the sense of power in bringing things to pass, the feeling of leadership and the consequence derived from its recognition; but they embark in this enterprise in order that they may have the position and the luxury that increased wealth will bring, the object being, in most cases, simply material advantages: sumptuous houses, furnished with all the luxuries which are the signs of wealth, including, of course, libraries and pictures and statuary and curiosities, the most showy equipages and troops of servants; the object being that their wives shall dress magnificently, glitter in diamonds and velvets, and never need to put their feet to the ground; that they may command the best stalls in the church, the best pews in the theatre, the choicest rooms in the inn, and—a consideration that Plato does not mention, because his world was not our world—that they may impress and reduce to obsequious deference the hotel clerk.

This life—for this enterprise and its objects are types of a considerable portion of life—is not without its ideal, its hero, its highest expression, its consummate flower. It is expressed in a word which I use without any

sense of its personality, as the French use the word Barnum—for our crude young nation has the distinction of adding a verb to the French language, the verb *to barnum*—it is expressed in the well-known name Crœsus. This is a standard—impossible to be reached perhaps, but a standard. If one may say so, the country is sown with seeds of Crœsus, and the crop is forward and promising. The interest to us now in the observation of this phase of modern life is not in the least for purposes of satire or of reform. We are inquiring how wholly this conception of life is divorced from the desire to learn what has been done and said to the end that better things may be done and said hereafter, in order that we may understand the popular conception of the insignificant value of literature in human affairs. But it is not aside from our subject, rather right in its path, to take heed of what the philosophers say of the effect in other respects of the pursuit of wealth.

One cause of the decay of the power of defence in a state, says the Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws*—one cause is the love of wealth, which wholly absorbs men and never for a moment allows them to think of anything but their private possessions; on this the soul of

every citizen hangs suspended, and can attend to nothing but his daily gain; mankind are ready to learn any branch of knowledge and to follow any pursuit which tends to this end, and they laugh at any other; that is the reason why a city will not be in earnest about war or any other good and honorable pursuit.

The accumulation of gold in the treasury of private individuals, says Socrates, in the *Republic*, is the ruin of democracy. They invent illegal modes of expenditure; and what do they or their wives care about the law?

“And then one, seeing another’s display, proposes to rival him, and thus the whole body of citizens acquires a similar character.

“After that they get on in a trade, and the more they think of making a fortune, the less they think of virtue; for when riches and virtue are placed together in the balance, the one always rises as the other falls.

“And in proportion as riches and rich men are honored in the state, virtue and the virtuous are dishonored.

“And what is honored is cultivated, and that which has no honor is neglected.

“And so at last, instead of loving contention and glory, men become lovers of trade and money, and they honor and reverence the rich



man and make a ruler of him, and dishonor the poor man.

“They do so.”

The object of a reasonable statesman (it is Plato who is really speaking in the *Laws*) is not that the state should be as great and rich as possible, should possess gold and silver, and have the greatest empire by sea and land.

The citizen must, indeed, be happy and good, and the legislator will seek to make him so; but very rich and very good at the same time he cannot be; not at least in the sense in which many speak of riches. For they describe by the term “rich” the few who have the most valuable possessions, though the owner of them be a rogue. And if this is true, I can never assent to the doctrine that the rich man will be happy: he must be good as well as rich. And good in a high degree and rich in a high degree at the same time he cannot be. Some one will ask, Why not? And we shall answer, Because acquisitions which come from sources which are just and unjust indifferently are more than double those which come from just sources only; and the sums which are expended neither honorably nor disgracefully are only half as great as those which are expended honorably and on honorable purposes. Thus if one ac-

quires double and spends half, the other, who is in the opposite case and is a good man, cannot possibly be wealthier than he. The first (I am speaking of the saver, and not of the spender) is not always bad; he may indeed in some cases be utterly bad, but as I was saying, a good man he never is. For he who receives money unjustly as well as justly, and spends neither justly nor unjustly, will be a rich man if he be also thrifty. On the other hand, the utterly bad man is generally profligate, and therefore poor; while he who spends on noble objects, and acquires wealth by just means only, can hardly be remarkable for riches any more than he can be very poor. The argument, then, is right in declaring that the very rich are not good, and if they are not good they are not happy.

✓ And the conclusion of Plato is that we ought not to pursue any occupation to the neglect of that for which riches exist—"I mean," he says, "soul and body, which without gymnastics and without education will never be worth anything; and therefore, as we have said not once but many times, the care of riches should have the last place in our thoughts."

✕ Men cannot be happy unless they are good, and they cannot be good unless the care of

the soul occupies the first place in their thoughts. That is the first interest of man; the interest in the body is midway; and last of all, when rightly regarded, is the interest about money.

The majority of mankind reverses this order of interests, and therefore it sets literature to one side as of no practical account in human life. More than this, it not only drops it out of mind, but it has no conception of its influence and power in the very affairs from which it seems to be excluded. It is my purpose to show not only the close relation of literature to ordinary life, but its eminent position in life, and its saving power in lives which do not suspect its influence or value. Just as it is virtue that saves the state, if it be saved, although the majority do not recognize it and attribute the salvation of the state to energy, and to obedience to the laws of political economy, and to discoveries in science, and to financial contrivances; so it is that in the life of generations of men, considered from an ethical and not from a religious point of view, the most potent and lasting influence for a civilization that is worth anything, a civilization that does not by its own nature work its decay, is that which I call literature.

It is time to define what we mean by literature. We may arrive at the meaning by the definition of exclusion. We do not mean all books, but some books; not all that is written and published, but only a small part of it. We do not mean books of law, of theology, of politics, of science, of medicine, and not necessarily books of travel, or adventure, or biography, or fiction even. These may all be ephemeral in their nature. The term *belles-lettres* does not fully express it, for it is too narrow. In books of law, theology, politics, medicine, science, travel, adventure, biography, philosophy, and fiction there may be passages that possess, or the whole contents may possess, that quality which comes within our meaning of literature. It must have in it something of the enduring and the universal. When we use the term, art, we do not mean the arts; we are indicating a quality that may be in any of the arts. In art and literature we require not only an expression of the facts in nature and in human life, but of feeling, thought, emotion. There must be an appeal to the universal in the race. It is, for example, impossible for a Christian to-day to understand what the religious system of the Egyptians of three thousand years ago was to the

Egyptian mind, or to grasp the idea conveyed to a Chinaman's thought in the phrase, "the worship of the principle of heaven"; but the Christian of to-day comprehends perfectly the letters of an Egyptian scribe in the time of Thotmes III., who described the comical miseries of his campaign with as clear an appeal to universal human nature as Horace used in his *Iter Brundisium*; and the maxims of Confucius are as comprehensible as the bitterness of Thomas à Kempis. De Quincey distinguishes between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The definition is not exact; but we may say that the one is a statement of what is known, the other is an emanation from the man himself; or that one may add to the sum of human knowledge, and the other addresses itself to a higher want in human nature than the want of knowledge. We select and set aside as literature that which is original, the product of what we call genius. As I have said, the subject of a production does not always determine the desired quality which makes it literature. A biography may contain all the facts in regard to a man and his character, arranged in an orderly and comprehensible manner, and yet not be literature; but it may be so written, like Plutarch's *Lives* or

Defoe's account of Robinson Crusoe, that it is literature, and of imperishable value as a picture of human life, as a satisfaction to the want of the human mind which is higher than the want of knowledge. And this contribution, which I desire to be understood to mean when I speak of literature, is precisely the thing of most value in the lives of the majority of men, whether they are aware of it or not. It may be weighty and profound; it may be light, as light as the fall of a leaf or a bird's song on the shore; it may be the thought of Plato when he discourses of the character necessary in a perfect state, or of Socrates, who, out of the theorem of an absolute beauty, goodness, greatness, and the like, deduces the immortality of the soul; or it may be the love-song of a Scotch ploughman: but it has this one quality of answering to a need in human nature higher than a need for facts, for knowledge, for wealth.

In noticing the remoteness in the popular conception of the relation of literature to life, we must not neglect to take into account what may be called the arrogance of culture, an arrogance that has been emphasized, in these days of reaction from the old attitude of literary obsequiousness, by harsh distinctions and

hard words, which are paid back by equally emphasized contempt. The apostles of light regard the rest of mankind as barbarians and Philistines, and the world retorts that these self-constituted apostles are idle word-mongers, without any sympathy with humanity, critics and jeerers who do nothing to make the conditions of life easier. It is natural that every man should magnify the circle of the world in which he is active and imagine that all outside of it is comparatively unimportant. Everybody who is not a drone has his sufficient world. To the lawyer it is his cases and the body of law, it is the legal relation of men that is of supreme importance; to the merchant and manufacturer all the world consists in buying and selling, in the production and exchange of products; to the physician all the world is diseased and in need of remedies; to the clergyman speculation and the discussion of dogmas and historical theology assume immense importance; the politician has his world, the artist his also, and the man of books and letters a realm still apart from all others. And to each of these persons what is outside of his world seems of secondary importance; he is absorbed in his own, which seems to him all-embracing. To the lawyer everybody is or ought to be a

litigant; to the grocer the world is that which eats, and pays—with more or less regularity; to the scholar the world is in books and ideas. One realizes how possessed he is with his own little world only when by chance he changes his profession or occupation and looks back upon the law, or politics, or journalism, and sees in its true proportion what it was that once absorbed him and seemed to him so large. When Socrates discusses with Gorgias the value of rhetoric, the use of which, the latter asserts, relates to the greatest and best of human things, Socrates says: I dare say you have heard men singing at feasts the old drinking-song, in which the singers enumerate the goods of life—first, health; beauty next; thirdly, wealth honestly acquired. The producers of these things—the physician, the trainer, the money-maker—each in turn contends that his art produces the greatest good. Surely, says the physician, health is the greatest good; there is more good in my art, says the trainer, for my business is to make men beautiful and strong in body; and consider, says the money-maker, whether any one can produce a greater good than wealth. But, insists Gorgias, the greatest good of men, of which I am the creator, is that which gives



men freedom in their persons, and the power of ruling over others in their several states—that is, the word which persuades the judge in the court, or the senators in the council, or the citizens in the assembly: if you have the power of uttering this word, you will have the physician your slave, and the trainer your slave, and the money-maker of whom you talk will be found to gather treasures, not for himself, but for those who are able to speak and persuade the multitude.

What we call life is divided into occupations and interests, and the horizons of mankind are bounded by them. It happens naturally enough, therefore, that there should be a want of sympathy in regard to these pursuits among men, the politician despising the scholar, and the scholar looking down upon the politician, and the man of affairs, the man of industries, not caring to conceal his contempt for both the others. And still more reasonable does the division appear between all the world which is devoted to material life, and the few who live in and for the expression of thought and emotion. It is a pity that this should be so, for it can be shown that life would not be worth living divorced from the gracious and ennobling influence of literature, and that

literature suffers atrophy when it does not concern itself with the facts and feelings of men.

If the poet lives in a world apart from the vulgar, the most lenient apprehension of him is that his is a sort of fool's paradise. One of the most curious features in the relation of literature to life is this, that while poetry, the production of the poet, is as necessary to universal man as the atmosphere, and as acceptable, the poet is regarded with that mingling of compassion and undervaluation, and perhaps awe, which once attached to the weak-minded and insane, and which is sometimes expressed by the term "inspired idiot." However the poet may have been petted and crowned, however his name may have been diffused among peoples, I doubt not that the popular estimate of him has always been substantially what it is to-day. And we all know that it is true, true in our individual consciousness, that if a man be known as a poet and nothing else, if his character is sustained by no other achievement than the production of poetry, he suffers in our opinion a loss of respect. And this is only recovered for him after he is dead, and his poetry is left alone to speak for his name. However fond my lord

and lady were of the ballad, the place of the minstrel was at the lower end of the hall. If we are pushed to say why this is, why this happens to the poet and not to the producers of anything else that excites the admiration of mankind, we are forced to admit that there is something in the poet to sustain the popular judgment of his inutility. In all the occupations and professions of life there is a sign put up, invisible but none the less real, and expressing an almost universal feeling—"No poet need apply." And this is not because there are so many poor poets; for there are poor lawyers, poor soldiers, poor statesmen, incompetent business men; but none of the personal disparagement attaches to them that is affixed to the poet. This popular estimate of the poet extends also, possibly in less degree, to all the producers of the literature that does not concern itself with knowledge. It is not our care to inquire further why this is so, but to repeat that it is strange that it should be so when poetry is, and has been at all times, the universal solace of all peoples who have emerged out of barbarism, the one thing not supernatural and yet akin to the supernatural, that makes the world, in its hard and sordid conditions, tolerable to the race. For poetry is not

merely the comfort of the refined and the delight of the educated; it is the alleviator of poverty, the pleasure-ground of the ignorant, the bright spot in the most dreary pilgrimage. We cannot conceive the abject animal condition of our race were poetry abstracted; and we do not wonder that this should be so when we reflect that it supplies a want higher than the need for food, for raiment, or ease of living, and that the mind needs support as much as the body. The majority of mankind live largely in the imagination, the office or use of which is to lift them in spirit out of the bare physical conditions in which the majority exist. There are races, which we may call the poetical races, in which this is strikingly exemplified. It would be difficult to find poverty more complete, physical wants less gratified, the conditions of life more bare than among the Oriental peoples from the Nile to the Ganges and from the Indian Ocean to the steppes of Siberia. But there are perhaps none among the more favored races who live so much in the world of imagination fed by poetry and romance. Watch the throng seated about an Arab or Indian or Persian storyteller and poet, men and women with all the marks of want, hungry, almost naked, with-

out any prospect in life of ever bettering their sordid condition ; see their eyes kindle, their breathing suspended, their tense absorption ; see their tears, hear their laughter, note their excitement as the magician unfolds to them a realm of the imagination in which they are free for the hour to wander, tasting a keen and deep enjoyment that all the wealth of Cræsus cannot purchase for his disciples. Measure, if you can, what poetry is to them, what their lives would be without it. To the millions and millions of men who are in this condition, the bard, the story-teller, the creator of what we are considering as literature, comes with the one thing that can lift them out of poverty, suffering—all the woe of which nature is so heedless.

It is not alone of the poetical nations of the East that this is true, nor is this desire for the higher enjoyment always wanting in the savage tribes of the West. When the Jesuit Fathers in 1768 landed upon the almost untouched and unexplored southern Pacific coast, they found in the San Gabriel Valley in Lower California that the Indians had games and feasts at which they decked themselves in flower garlands that reached to their feet, and that at these games there were song

X } contests which sometimes lasted for three days. This contest of the poets was an old custom with them. And we remember how the ignorant Icelanders, who had never seen a written character, created the splendid Saga, and handed it down from father to son. We shall scarcely find in Europe a peasantry whose abject poverty is not in some measure alleviated by this power which literature gives them to live outside it. Through our sacred Scriptures, through the ancient story-tellers, through the tradition which in literature made, as I said, the chief continuity in the stream of time, we all live a considerable, perhaps the better, portion of our lives in the Orient. But I am not sure that the Scotch peasant, the crofter in his Highland cabin, the operative in his squalid tenement-house, in the hopelessness of poverty, in the grime of a life made twice as hard as that of the Arab by an inimical climate, does not owe more to literature than the man of culture, whose material surroundings are heaven in the imagination of the poor. Think what his wretched life would be, in its naked deformity, without the popular ballads, without the romances of Scott, which have invested his land for him, as for us, with enduring charm; and especially with-

out the songs of Burns, which keep alive in him the feeling that he is a man, which impart to his blunted sensibility the delicious throb of spring—songs that enable him to hear the birds, to see the bits of blue sky—songs that make him tender of the wee bit daisy at his feet—songs that hearten him when his heart is fit to break with misery. Perhaps the English peasant, the English operative, is less susceptible to such influences than the Scotch or the Irish; but over him, sordid as his conditions are, close kin as he is to the clod, the light of poetry is diffused; there filters into his life, also, something of that divine stream of which we have spoken, a dialect poem that touches him, the leaf of a psalm, some bit of imagination, some tale of pathos, set afloat by a poor writer so long ago that it has become the common stock of human tradition—maybe from Palestine, maybe from the Ganges, perhaps from Athens—some expression of real emotion, some creation, we say, that makes for him a world, vague and dimly apprehended, that is not at all the actual world in which he sins and suffers. The poor woman, in a hut with an earth floor, a reeking roof, a smoky chimney, barren of comfort, so indecent that a gentleman would not

stable his horse in it, sits and sews upon a coarse garment, while she rocks the cradle of an infant about whom she cherishes no illusions that his lot will be other than that of his father before him. As she sits forlorn, it is not the wretched hovel that she sees, nor other hovels like it—rows of tenements of hopeless poverty, the ale-house, the gin-shop, the coal-pit, and the choking factory—but

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood  
Stand dressed in living green”

for her, thanks to the poet. But, alas for the poet! there is not a peasant nor a wretched operative of them all who will not shake his head and tap his forehead with his forefinger when the poor poet chap passes by. The peasant has the same opinion of him that the physician, the trainer, and the money-lender had of the rhetorician.

The hard conditions of the lonely New England life, with its religious theories as sombre as its forests, its rigid notions of duty as difficult to make bloom into sweetness and beauty as the stony soil, would have been unendurable if they had not been touched with the ideal created by the poet. There was in creed and purpose the virility that creates a state, and,



as Menander says, the country which is cultivated with difficulty produces brave men; but we leave out an important element in the lives of the Pilgrims if we overlook the means they had of living above their barren circumstances. I do not speak only of the culture which many of them brought from the universities, of the Greek and Roman classics, and what unworldly literature they could glean from the productive age of Elizabeth and James, but of another source, more universally resorted to, and more powerful in exciting imagination and emotion, and filling the want in human nature of which we have spoken. They had the Bible, and it was more to them, much more, than a book of religion, than a revelation of religious truth, a rule for the conduct of life, or a guide to heaven. It supplied the place to them of the Mahabharata to the Hindoo, of the story-teller to the Arab. It opened to them a boundless realm of poetry and imagination.

What is the Bible? It might have sufficed, accepted as a book of revelation, for all the purposes of moral guidance, spiritual consolation, and systematized authority, if it had been a collection of precepts, a dry code of morals, an arsenal of judgments, and a treasury of

promises. We are accustomed to think of the Pilgrims as training their intellectual faculties in the knottiest problems of human responsibility and destiny, toughening their mental fibre in wrestling with dogmas and the decrees of Providence, forgetting what else they drew out of the Bible: what else it was to them in a degree it has been to few peoples in any age. (For the Bible is the unequalled record of thought and emotion, the reservoir of poetry, traditions, stories, parables, exaltations, consolations, great imaginative adventure, for which the spirit of man is always longing.) It might have been, in warning examples and commands, all-sufficient to enable men to make a decent pilgrimage on earth and reach a better country; but it would have been a very different book to mankind if it had been only a volume of statutes, and if it lacked its wonderful literary quality. It might have enabled men to reach a better country, but not, while on earth, to rise into and live in that better country, or to live in a region above the sordidness of actual life. For, apart from its religious intention and sacred character, the book is so written that it has supremely in its history, poetry, prophecies, promises, stories, that clear literary qual-

ity that supplies, as certainly no other single book does, the want in the human mind which is higher than the want of facts or knowledge/

The Bible is the best illustration of the literature of power, for it always concerns itself with life, it touches it at all points. And this is the test of any piece of literature—its universal appeal to human nature. When I consider the narrow limitations of the Pilgrim households, the absence of luxury, the presence of danger and hardship, the harsh laws—only less severe than the contemporary laws of England and Virginia—the weary drudgery, the few pleasures, the curb upon the expression of emotion and of tenderness, the ascetic repression of worldly thought, the absence of poetry in the routine occupations and conditions, I can feel what the Bible must have been to them. It was an open door into a world where emotion is expressed, where imagination can range, where love and longing find a language, where imagery is given to every noble and suppressed passion of the soul, where every aspiration finds wings. It was history, or, as Thucydides said, philosophy teaching by example; it was the romance of real life; it was entertainment unailing; the wonder-book of childhood, the volume of sweet sentiment to the shy

maiden, the sword to the soldier, the inciter of the youth to heroic enduring of hardness, it was the refuge of the aged in failing activity. Perhaps we can nowhere find a better illustration of the true relation of literature to life than in this example.

X Let us consider the comparative value of literature to mankind. By comparative value I mean its worth to men in comparison with other things of acknowledged importance, such as the creation of industries, the government of states, the manipulation of the politics of an age, the achievements in war and discovery, and the lives of admirable men. It needs a certain perspective to judge of this aright, for the near and the immediate always assume importance. The work that an age has on hand, whether it be discovery, conquest, the wars that determine boundaries or are fought for policies, the industries that develop a country or affect the character of a people, the wielding of power, the accumulation of fortunes, the various activities of any given civilization or period, assume such enormous proportions to those engaged in them that such a modest thing as the literary product seems insignificant in comparison; and hence it is that the man of action always holds in slight esteem

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the man of thought, and especially the expresser of feeling and emotion, the poet and the humorist. It is only when we look back over the ages, when civilizations have passed or changed, over the rivalries of states, the ambitions and enmities of men, the shining deeds and the base deeds that make up history, that we are enabled to see what remains, what is permanent. Perhaps the chief result left to the world out of a period of heroic exertion, of passion and struggle and accumulation, is a sheaf of poems, or the record by a man of letters of some admirable character. Spain filled a large place in the world in the sixteenth century, and its influence upon history is by no means spent yet; but we have inherited out of that period nothing, I dare say, that is of more value than the romance of *Don Quixote*. It is true that the best heritage of generation from generation is the character of great men; but we always owe its transmission to the poet and the writer. Without Plato there would be no Soerates. There is no influence comparable in human life to the personality of a powerful man, so long as he is present to his generation, or lives in the memory of those who felt his influence. But after time has passed, will the world, will human life, that is essentially the

same in all changing conditions, be more affected by what Bismarck did or by what Goethe said?

We may without impropriety take for an illustration of the comparative value of literature to human needs the career of a man now living. In the opinion of many, Mr. Gladstone is the greatest Englishman of this age. What would be the position of the British empire, what would be the tendency of English politics and society without him, is a matter for speculation. He has not played such a rôle for England and its neighbors as Bismarck has played for Germany and the Continent, but he has been one of the most powerful influences in moulding English action. He is the foremost teacher. Rarely in history has a nation depended more upon a single man, at times, than the English upon Gladstone, upon his will, his ability, and especially his character. In certain recent crises the thought of losing him produced something like a panic in the English mind, justifying in regard to him the hyperbole of Choate upon the death of Webster, that the sailor on the distant sea would feel less safe—as if a protecting providence had been withdrawn from the world. His mastery of finance and of economic prob-

lems, his skill in debate, his marvellous achievements in oratory, have extorted the admiration of his enemies. There is scarcely a province in government, letters, art, or research in which the mind can win triumphs that he has not invaded and displayed his power in; scarcely a question in politics, reform, letters, religion, archæology, sociology, which he has not discussed with ability. He is a scholar, critic, parliamentarian, orator, voluminous writer. He seems equally at home in every field of human activity—a man of prodigious capacity and enormous acquirements. He can take up, with a turn of the hand, and always with vigor, the cause of the Greeks, Papal power, education, theology, the influence of Egypt on Homer, the effect of English legislation on King O'Brien, contributing something noteworthy to all the discussions of the day. But I am not aware that he has ever produced a single page of literature. Whatever space he has filled in his own country, whatever and however enduring the impression he has made upon English life and society, does it seem likely that the sum total of his immense activity in so many fields, after the passage of so many years, will be worth to the world as much as the simple story of *Rab and his Friends*?

Already in America I doubt if it is. The illustration might have more weight with some minds if I contrasted the work of this great man—as to its answering to a deep want in human nature—with a novel like *Henry Esmond* or a poem like *In Memoriam*; but I think it is sufficient to rest it upon so slight a performance as the sketch by Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh. For the truth is that a little page of literature, nothing more than a sheet of paper with a poem written on it, may have that vitality, that enduring quality, that adaptation to life, that make it of more consequence to all who inherit it than every material achievement of the age that produced it. It was nothing but a sheet of paper with a poem on it, carried to the door of his London patron, for which the poet received a guinea, and perhaps a seat at the foot of my lord's table. What was that scrap compared to my lord's business, his great establishment, his equipages in the Park, his position in society, his weight in the House of Lords, his influence in Europe? And yet that scrap of paper has gone the world over; it has been sung in the camp, wept over in the lonely cottage; it has gone with the marching regiments, with the explorers—with mankind, in short, on its way down the ages, brighten-



ing, consoling, elevating life; and my lord, who regarded as scarcely above a menial the poet to whom he tossed the guinea—my lord, with all his pageantry and power, has utterly gone and left no witness..

(1886.)



SIMPLICITY .



## SIMPLICITY

No doubt one of the most charming creations in all poetry is Nausicaä, the white-armed daughter of King Alcinous. There is no scene, no picture, in the heroic times more pleasing than the meeting of Ulysses with this damsel on the wild sea-shore of Scheria, where the Wanderer had been tossed ashore by the tempest. The place of this classic meeting was probably on the west coast of Corfu, that incomparable island, to whose beauty the legend of the exquisite maidenhood of the daughter of the king of the Phæacians has added an immortal bloom.

We have no difficulty in recalling it in all its distinctness: the bright morning on which Nausicaä came forth from the palace, where her mother sat and turned the distaff loaded with a fleece dyed in sea-purple, mounted the car piled with the robes to be cleansed in the stream, and, attended by her bright-haired, laughing handmaidens, drove to the banks of

the river, where out of its sweet grasses it flowed over clean sand into the Adriatic. The team is loosed to browse the grass; the garments are flung into the dark water, then trampled with hasty feet in frolic rivalry, and spread upon the gravel to dry. Then the maidens bathe, give their limbs the delicate oil from the cruse of gold, sit by the stream and eat their meal, and, refreshed, mistress and maidens lay aside their veils and play at ball, and Nausicaä begins a song. Though all were fair, like Diana was this spotless virgin midst her maids. A missed ball and maidenly screams waken Ulysses from his sleep in the thicket. At the apparition of the unclad, shipwrecked sailor the maidens flee right and left. Nausicaä alone keeps her place, secure in her unconscious modesty. To the astonished Sport of Fortune the vision of this radiant girl, in shape and stature and in noble air, is more than mortal, yet scarcely more than woman :

“ Like thee, I saw of late,  
In Delos, a young palm-tree growing up  
Beside Apollo’s altar.”

When the Wanderer has bathed, and been clad in robes from the pile on the sand, and

refreshed with food and wine which the hospitable maidens put before him, the train sets out for the town, Ulysses following the chariot among the bright-haired women. But before that Nausicaä, in the candor of those early days, says to her attendants :

“I would that I might call  
A man like him my husband, dwelling here,  
And here content to dwell.”

Is there any woman in history more to be desired than this sweet, pure-minded, honest-hearted girl, as she is depicted with a few swift touches by the great poet?—the dutiful daughter in her father's house, the joyous companion of girls, the beautiful woman whose modest bearing commands the instant homage of man. Nothing is more enduring in literature than this girl and the scene on the Corfu sands.

The sketch, though distinct, is slight, little more than outlines; no elaboration, no analysis; just an incident, as real as the blue sky of Scheria and the waves on the yellow sand. All the elements of the picture are simple, human, natural, standing in as unconfused relations as any events in common life. I am not recalling it because it is a conspicuous in-

stance of the true realism that is touched with the ideality of genius, which is the immortal element in literature, but as an illustration of the other necessary quality in all productions of the human mind that remain age after age, and that is simplicity. This is the stamp of all enduring work ; this is what appeals to the universal understanding from generation to generation. All the masterpieces that endure and become a part of our lives are characterized by it. The eye, like the mind, hates confusion and overcrowding. All the elements in beauty, grandeur, pathos, are simple—as simple as the lines in a Nile picture: the strong river, the yellow desert, the palms, the pyramids ; hardly more than a horizontal line and a perpendicular line ; only there is the sky, the atmosphere, the color—those need genius.

We may test contemporary literature by its conformity to the canon of simplicity—that is, if it has not that, we may conclude that it lacks one essential lasting quality. It may please ; it may be ingenious—brilliant, even ; it may be the fashion of the day, and a fashion that will hold its power of pleasing for half a century, but it will be a fashion. Mannerisms of course will not deceive us, nor ex-



travagances, eccentricities, affectations, nor the straining after effect by the use of coined or far-fetched words and prodigality in adjectives. But, style? Yes, there is such a thing as style, good and bad; and the style should be the writer's own and characteristic of him, as his speech is. But the moment I admire a style for its own sake, a style that attracts my attention so constantly that I say, How good that is! I begin to be suspicious. If it is too good, too pronouncedly good, I fear I shall not like it so well on a second reading. If it comes to stand between me and the thought, or the personality behind the thought, I grow more and more suspicious. Is the book a window, through which I am to see life? Then I cannot have the glass too clear. Is it to affect me like a strain of music? Then I am still more disturbed by any affectations. Is it to produce the effect of a picture? Then I know I want the simplest harmony of color. And I have learned that the most effective word-painting, as it is called, is the simplest. This is true if it is a question only of present enjoyment. But we may be sure that any piece of literature which attracts only by some trick of style, however it may blaze up for a day and startle the world with its flash,

lacks the element of endurance. We do not need much experience to tell us the difference between a lamp and a Roman candle. Even in our day we have seen many reputations flare up, illuminate the sky, and then go out in utter darkness. When we take a proper historical perspective, we see that it is the universal, the simple, that lasts.

I am not sure whether simplicity is a matter of nature or of cultivation. Barbarous nature likes display, excessive ornament; and when we have arrived at the nobly simple, the perfect proportion, we are always likely to relapse into the confused and the complicated. The most cultivated men, we know, are the simplest in manners, in taste, in their style. It is a note of some of the purest modern writers that they avoid comparisons, similes, and even too much use of metaphor. But the mass of men are always relapsing into the tawdry and the over-ornamented. It is a characteristic of youth, and it seems also to be a characteristic of over-development. Literature, in any language, has no sooner arrived at the highest vigor of simple expression than it begins to run into prettiness, conceits, over-elaboration. This is a fact which may be verified by studying differ-

ent periods, from classic literature to our own day.

It is the same with architecture. The classic Greek runs into the excessive elaboration of the Roman period, the Gothic into the flamboyant, and so on. We have had several attacks of architectural measles in this country, which have left the land spotted all over with houses in bad taste. Instead of developing the colonial simplicity on lines of dignity and harmony to modern use, we stuck on the pseudo-classic, we broke out in the Mansard, we broke all up into the whimsicalities of the so-called Queen Anne, without regard to climate or comfort. The eye speedily tires of all these things. It is a positive relief to look at an old colonial mansion, even if it is as plain as a barn. What the eye demands is simple lines, proportion, harmony in mass, dignity; above all, adaptation to use. And what we must have also is individuality in house and in furniture; that makes the city, the village, picturesque and interesting. The highest thing in architecture, as in literature, is the development of individuality in simplicity.

Dress is a dangerous topic to meddle with. I myself like the attire of the maidens of Scheria, though Nausicaä, we must note, was

“clad royally.” But climate cannot be disregarded, and the vestment that was so fitting on a Greek girl whom I saw at the Second Cataract of the Nile would scarcely be appropriate in New York. If the maidens of one of our colleges for girls, say Vassar for illustration, habited like the Phæacian girls of Scheria, went down to the Hudson to cleanse the rich robes of the house, and were surprised by the advent of a stranger from the city, landing from a steamboat—a wandering broker, let us say, clad in wide trousers, long top-coat, and a tall hat—I fancy that he would be more astonished than Ulysses was at the bevy of girls that scattered at his approach. It is not that women must be all things to all men, but that their simplicity must conform to time and circumstance. What I do not understand is that simplicity gets banished altogether, and that fashion, on a dictation that no one can trace the origin of, makes that lovely in the eyes of women to-day which will seem utterly abhorrent to them to-morrow. There appears to be no line of taste running through the changes. The only consolation to you, the woman of the moment, is that while the costume your grandmother wore makes her, in the painting, a guy in your

eyes, the costume you wear will give your grandchildren the same impression of you. And the satisfaction for you is the thought that the latter raiment will be worse than the other two—that is to say, less well suited to display the shape, station, and noble air which brought Ulysses to his knees on the sands of Corfu.

Another reason why I say that I do not know whether simplicity belongs to nature or art is that fashion is as strong to pervert and disfigure in savage nations as it is in civilized. It runs to as much eccentricity in hair-dressing and ornament in the costume of the jingling belles of Nootka and the maidens of Nubia as in any court or coterie which we aspire to imitate. The only difference is that remote and unsophisticated communities are more constant to a style they once adopt. There are isolated peasant communities in Europe who have kept for centuries the most uncouth and inconvenient attire, while we have run through a dozen variations in the art of attraction by dress, from the most puffed and bulbous ballooning to the extreme of limpness and lankness. I can only conclude that the civilized human being is a restless creature, whose motives in regard to costume are utterly unfathomable.

We need, however, to go a little further in this question of simplicity. Nausicaä was "clad royally." There was a distinction, then, between her and her handmaidens. She was clad simply, according to her condition. Taste does not by any means lead to uniformity. I have read of a commune in which all the women dressed alike and unbecomingly, so as to discourage all attempt to please or attract, or to give value to the different accents of beauty. The end of those women was worse than the beginning. Simplicity is not ugliness, nor poverty, nor barrenness, nor necessarily plainness. What is simplicity for another may not be for you, for your condition, your tastes, especially for your wants. It is a personal question. You go beyond simplicity when you attempt to appropriate more than your wants, your aspirations, whatever they are, demand—that is, to appropriate for show, for ostentation, more than your life can assimilate, can make thoroughly yours. There is no limit to what you may have, if it is necessary for you, if it is not a superfluity to you. What would be simplicity to you may be superfluity to another. The rich robes that Nausicaä wore she wore like a goddess. The moment your dress, your house, your house-

grounds, your furniture, your scale of living, are beyond the rational satisfaction of your own desires—that is, are for ostentation, for imposition upon the public—they are superfluous, the line of simplicity is passed. Every human being has a right to whatever can best feed his life, satisfy his legitimate desires, contribute to the growth of his soul. It is not for me to judge whether this is luxury or want. There is no merit in riches nor in poverty. There is merit in that simplicity of life which seeks to grasp no more than is necessary for the development and enjoyment of the individual. Most of us, in all conditions, are weighted down with superfluities or worried to acquire them. Simplicity is making the journey of this life with just baggage enough.

The needs of every person differ from the needs of every other; we can make no standard for wants or possessions. But the world would be greatly transformed and much more easy to live in if everybody limited his acquisitions to his ability to assimilate them to his life. The destruction of simplicity is a craving for things, not because we need them, but because others have them. Because one man who lives in a plain little house, in all the

restrictions of mean surroundings, would be happier in a mansion suited to his taste and his wants, is no argument that another man, living in a palace, in useless ostentation, would not be better off in a dwelling which conforms to his cultivation and habits. It is so hard to learn the lesson that there is no satisfaction in gaining more than we personally want.

The matter of simplicity, then, comes into literary style, into building, into dress, into life, individualized always by one's personality. In each we aim at the expression of the best that is in us, not at imitation or ostentation.

The women in history, in legend, in poetry, whom we love, we do not love because they are "clad royally." In our day, to be clad royally is scarcely a distinction. To have a superfluity is not a distinction. But in those moments when we have a clear vision of life, that which seems to us most admirable and desirable is the simplicity that endears to us the idyl of Nausicaä.

(1889.)



“EQUALITY”



## “EQUALITY ”

IN accordance with the advice of Diogenes of Apollonia in the beginning of his treatise on Natural Philosophy—“ It appears to me to be well for every one who commences any sort of philosophical treatise to lay down some undeniable principle to start with ”—we offer this:

*All men are created unequal.*

It would be a most interesting study to trace the growth in the world of the doctrine of “equality.” That is not the purpose of this essay, any further than is necessary for definition. We use the term in its popular sense, in the meaning, somewhat vague, it is true, which it has had since the middle of the eighteenth century. In the popular apprehension it is apt to be confounded with uniformity ; and this not without reason, since in many applications of the theory the tendency is to produce likeness or uniformity. Nature, with equal laws, tends always to diversity ; and doubtless the just notion of equality in human affairs consists

with unlikeness. Our purpose is to note some of the tendencies of the dogma as it is at present understood by a considerable portion of mankind.

We regard the formulated doctrine as modern. It would be too much to say that some notion of the "equality of men" did not underlie the socialistic and communistic ideas which prevailed from time to time in the ancient world, and broke out with volcanic violence in the Grecian and Roman communities. But those popular movements seem to us rather blind struggles against physical evils, and to be distinguished from those more intelligent actions based upon the theory which began to stir Europe prior to the Reformation.

It is sufficient for our purpose to take the well-defined theory of modern times. Whether the ideal republic of Plato was merely a convenient form for philosophical speculation, or whether, as the greatest authority on political economy in Germany, Dr. William Roscher, thinks, it "was no mere fancy;" whether Plato's notion of the identity of man and the state is compatible with the theory of equality, or whether it is, as many communists say, indispensable to it, we need not here discuss. It is true that in his *Republic* almost all the

social theories which have been deduced from the modern proclamation of equality are elaborated. There was to be a community of property, and also a community of wives and children. The equality of the sexes was insisted on to the extent of living in common, identical education and pursuits, equal share in all labors, in occupations, and in government. Between the sexes there was allowed only one ultimate difference. The Greeks, as Professor Jowett says, had noble conceptions of womanhood; but Plato's ideal for the sexes had no counterpart in their actual life, nor could they have understood the sort of equality upon which he insisted. The same is true of the Romans throughout their history.

More than any other Oriental peoples the Egyptians of the Ancient Empire entertained the idea of the equality of the sexes; but the equality of man was not conceived by them. Still less did any notion of it exist in the Jewish state. It was the fashion with the socialists of 1793, as it has been with the international assemblages at Geneva in our own day, to trace the genesis of their notions back to the first Christian age. The far-reaching influence of the new gospel in the liberation of the human mind and in promoting just and divinely

ordered relations among men is admitted ; its origination of the social and political dogma we are considering is denied. We do not find that Christ himself anywhere expressed it or acted on it. He associated with the lowly, the vile, the outcast ; he taught that all men, irrespective of rank or possessions, are sinners, and in equal need of help. But he attempted no change in the conditions of society. The "communism" of the early Christians was the temporary relation of a persecuted and isolated sect, drawn together by common necessities and dangers, and by the new enthusiasm of self-surrender.\* Paul announced the universal brotherhood of man, but he as clearly recognized the subordination of society, in the duties of ruler and subject, master and slave, and in all the domestic relations ; and although his gospel may be interpreted to contain the ele-

\* "The community of goods of the first Christians at Jerusalem, so frequently cited and extolled, was only a community of use, not of ownership (Acts iv. 32), and throughout a voluntary act of love, not a duty (v. 4); least of all, a *right* which the poorer might assert. Spite of all this, that community of goods produced a chronic state of poverty in the church of Jerusalem." (*Principles of Political Economy*. By William Roscher. Note to Section LXXXI. English translation. New York : Henry Holt & Co. 1878.)

ments of revolution, it is not probable that he undertook to inculcate, by the proclamation of “universal brotherhood,” anything more than the duty of universal sympathy between all peoples and classes as society then existed.

If Christianity has been and is the force in promoting and shaping civilization that we regard it, we may be sure that it is not as a political agent, or an annuller of the inequalities of life, that we are to expect aid from it. Its office, or rather one of its chief offices on earth, is to diffuse through the world, regardless of condition or possessions or talent or opportunity, sympathy and a recognition of the value of manhood underlying every lot and every diversity—a value not measured by earthly accidents, but by heavenly standards. This we understand to be “Christian equality.” Of course it consists with inequalities of condition, with subordination, discipline, obedience; to obey and serve is as honorable as to command and to be served.

If the religion of Christ should ever be acclimated on earth, the result would not be the removal of hardships and suffering, or of the necessity of self-sacrifice; but the bitterness and discontent at unequal conditions would measurably disappear. At the bar of Chris-

tianity the poor man is the equal of the rich, and the learned of the unlearned, since intellectual acquisition is no guarantee of moral worth. The content that Christianity would bring to our perturbed society would come from the practical recognition of the truth that all conditions may be equally honorable. The assertion of the dignity of man and of labor is, we imagine, the sum and substance of the equality and communism of the New Testament. But we are to remember that this is not merely a "gospel for the poor."

Whatever the theories of the ancient world were, the development of democratic ideas is sufficiently marked in the fifteenth century, and even in the fourteenth, to rob the eighteenth of the credit of originating the doctrine of equality. To mention only one of the early writers,\* Marsilio, a physician of Padua, in 1324, said that the laws ought to be made by

\* For copious references to authorities on the spread of communistic and socialistic ideas and libertine community of goods and women in four periods of the world's history—namely, at the time of the decline of Greece, in the degeneration of the Roman republic, among the moderns in the age of the Reformation, and again in our own day—see Roscher's *Political Economy*, notes to Section LXXIX., *et seq.*



all the citizens ; and he based this sovereignty of the people upon the greater likelihood of laws being better obeyed, and also being good laws, when they were made by the whole body of the persons affected.

In 1750 and 1753, J. J. Rousseau published his two discourses on questions proposed by the Academy of Dijon : “Has the Restoration of Sciences Contributed to Purify or to Corrupt Manners?” and “What is the Origin of Inequality among Men, and is it Authorized by Natural Law?” These questions show the direction and the advance of thinking on social topics in the middle of the eighteenth century. Rousseau’s *Contrat-Social* and the novel *Émile* were published in 1761.

But almost three-quarters of a century before, in 1690, John Locke published his two treatises on government. Rousseau was familiar with them. Mr. John Morley, in his admirable study of Rousseau,\* fully discusses the latter’s obligation to Locke ; and the exposition leaves Rousseau little credit for originality, but considerable for illogical misconception. He was, in fact, the most illogical of

\* *Rousseau*. By John Morley. London : Chapman & Hall. 1873. I have used it freely in the glance at this period.

great men, and the most inconsistent even of geniuses. The *Contrat-Social* is a reaction in many things from the discourses, and *Émile* is almost an entire reaction, especially in the theory of education, from both.

His central doctrine of popular sovereignty was taken from Locke. The English philosopher said, in his second treatise, "To understand political power aright and derive it from its original, we must consider what state all men are naturally in; and that is a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their persons and possessions as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man—a state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection, unless the Lord and Master of them all should by any manifest declaration of His will set one above another, and confer on him by an evident and clear appointment an undoubted right to dominion and

sovereignty.” But a state of liberty is not a state of license. We cannot exceed our own rights without assailing the rights of others. There is no such subordination as authorizes us to destroy one another. As every one is bound to preserve himself, so he is bound to preserve the rest of mankind, and except to do justice upon an offender we may not impair the life, liberty, health, or goods of another. Here Locke deduces the power that one man may have over another; community could not exist if transgressors were not punished. Every wrong-doer places himself in “a state of war.” Here is the difference between the state of nature and the state of war, which men, says Locke, have confounded—alluding probably to Hobbes’s notion of the lawlessness of human society in the original condition.

The portion of Locke’s treatise which was not accepted by the French theorists was that relating to property. Property in lands or goods is due wholly and only to the labor man has put into it. By labor he has removed it from the common state in which nature has placed it, and annexed something to it that excludes the common rights of other men.

Rousseau borrowed from Hobbes as well as from Locke in his conception of popular sover-

eignty; but this was not his only lack of originality. His discourse on primitive society, his unscientific and unhistoric notions about the original condition of man, were those common in the middle of the eighteenth century. All the thinkers and philosophers and fine ladies and gentlemen assumed a certain state of nature, and built upon it, out of words and phrases, an airy and easy reconstruction of society, without a thought of investigating the past, or inquiring into the development of mankind. Every one talked of "the state of nature" as if he knew all about it. "The conditions of primitive man," says Mr. Morley, "were discussed by very incompetent ladies and gentlemen at convivial supper-parties, and settled with complete assurance." That was the age when solitary Frenchmen plunged into the wilderness of North America, confidently expecting to recover the golden age under the shelter of a wigwam and in the society of a squaw.

The state of nature of Rousseau was a state in which inequality did not exist, and with a fervid rhetoric he tried to persuade his readers that it was the happier state. He recognized inequality, it is true, as a word of two different meanings: first, physical inequality, differ-

ence of age, strength, health, and of intelligence and character; second, moral and political inequality, difference of privileges which some enjoy to the detriment of others—such as riches, honor, power. The first difference is established by nature, the second by man. So long, however, as the state of nature endures, no disadvantages flow from the natural inequalities.

In Rousseau's account of the means by which equality was lost, the incoming of the ideas of property is prominent. From property arose civil society. With property came in inequality. His exposition of inequality is confused, and it is not possible always to tell whether he means inequality of possessions or of political rights. His contemporary, Morelly, who published the *Basileade* in 1753, was troubled by no such ambiguity. He accepts the doctrine that men are formed by laws, but holds that they are by nature good, and that laws, by establishing a division of the products of nature, broke up the sociability of men, and that all political and moral evils are the result of private property. Political inequality is an accident of inequality of possessions, and the renovation of the latter lies in the abolition of the former.

The opening sentence of the *Contrat-Social* is, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is a slave," a statement which it is difficult to reconcile with the fact that every human being is born helpless, dependent, and into conditions of subjection, conditions that we have no reason to suppose were ever absent from the race. But Rousseau never said, "All men are born equal." He recognized, as we have seen, natural inequality. What he held was that the artificial differences springing from the social union were disproportionate to the capacities springing from the original constitution; and that society, as now organized, tends to make the gulf wider between those who have privileges and those who have none.

The well-known theory upon which Rousseau's superstructure rests is that society is the result of a compact, a partnership between men. They have not made an agreement to submit their individual sovereignty to some superior power, but they have made a covenant of brotherhood. It is a contract of association. Men were, and ought to be, equal co-operators, not only in politics, but in industries and all the affairs of life. All the citizens are participants in the sovereign authority. Their sovereignty is inalienable; power may be trans-

mitted, but not will ; if the people promise to obey, it dissolves itself by the very act—if there is a master, there is no longer a people. Sovereignty is also indivisible ; it cannot be split up into legislative, judiciary, and executive power.

Society being the result of a compact made by men, it followed that the partners could at any time remake it, their sovereignty being inalienable. And this the French socialists, misled by *a priori* notions, attempted to do, on the theory of the *Contrat-Social*, as if they had a *tabula rasa*, without regarding the existing constituents of society, or traditions, or historical growths.

Equality, as a phrase, having done duty as a dissolvent, was pressed into service as a constructor. As this is not so much an essay on the nature of equality as an attempt to indicate some of the modern tendencies to carry out what is illusory in the dogma, perhaps enough has been said of this period. Mr. Morley very well remarks that the doctrine of equality as a demand for a fair chance in the world is unanswerable ; but that it is false when it puts him who uses his chance well on the same level with him who uses it ill. There is no doubt that when Condorcet said, “Not

only equality of right, but equality of fact, is the goal of the social art," he uttered the sentiments of the socialists of the Revolution.

The next authoritative announcement of equality, to which it is necessary to refer, is in the American Declaration of Independence, in these words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed." And the Declaration goes on, in temperate and guarded language, to assert the right of a people to change their form of government when it becomes destructive of the ends named.

Although the genesis of these sentiments seems to be French rather than English, and equality is not defined, and critics have differed as to whether the equality clause is independent or qualified by what follows, it is not necessary to suppose that Thomas Jefferson meant anything inconsistent with the admitted facts of nature and of history. It is important to bear in mind that the statesmen of



our Revolution were inaugurating a political and not a social revolution, and that the gravamen of their protest was against the authority of a distant crown. Nevertheless, these dogmas, independent of the circumstances in which they were uttered, have exercised and do exercise a very powerful influence upon the thinking of mankind on social and political topics, and are being applied without limitations, and without recognition of the fact that if they are true, in the sense meant by their originators, they are not the whole truth. It is to be noticed that rights are mentioned, but not duties, and that if political rights only are meant, political duties are not inculcated as of equal moment. It is not announced that political power is a function to be discharged for the good of the whole body, and not a mere right to be enjoyed for the advantage of the possessor; and it is to be noted also that this idea did not enter into the conception of Rousseau.

The dogma that “government derives its just power from the consent of the governed” is entirely consonant with the book theories of the eighteenth century, and needs to be confronted, and practically is confronted, with the equally good dogma that “governments

derive their just power from conformity with the principles of justice." We are not to imagine, for instance, that the framers of the Declaration really contemplated the exclusion from political organization of all higher law than that in the "consent of the governed," or the application of the theory, let us say, to a colony composed for the most part of outcasts, murderers, thieves, and prostitutes, or to such states as to-day exist in the Orient. The Declaration was framed for a highly intelligent and virtuous society.

Many writers, and some of them English, have expressed curiosity, if not wonder, at the different fortunes which attended the doctrine of equality in America and in France. The explanation is on the surface, and need not be sought in the fact of a difference of social and political level in the two countries at the start, nor even in the further fact that the colonies were already accustomed to self-government. The simple truth is that the dogmas of the Declaration were not put into the fundamental law. The Constitution is the most practical state document ever made. It announces no dogmas, proclaims no theories. It accepted society as it was, with its habits and traditions, raising no abstract questions whether

men are born free or equal, or how society ought to be organized. It is simply a working compact, made by “the people,” to promote union, establish justice, and secure the blessings of liberty; and the equality is in the assumption of the right of “the people of the United States” to do this. And yet, in a recent number of *Blackwood's Magazine*, a writer makes the amusing statement, “I have never met an American who could deny that, while firmly maintaining that the theory was sound which, in the beautiful language of the Constitution, proclaims that all men were born equal, he was,” etc.

An enlightening commentary on the meaning of the Declaration, in the minds of the American statesmen of the period, is furnished by the opinions which some of them expressed upon the French Revolution while it was in progress. Gouverneur Morris, minister to France in 1789, was a conservative republican; Thomas Jefferson was a radical democrat. Both of them had a warm sympathy with the French “people” in the Revolution; both hoped for a republic; both recognized, we may reasonably infer, the sufficient cause of the Revolution in the long-continued corruption of court and nobility, and the intoler-

able sufferings of the lower orders ; and both, we have equal reason to believe, thought that a fair accommodation, short of a dissolution of society, was defeated by the imbecility of the king and the treachery and malignity of a considerable portion of the nobility. The Revolution was not caused by theories, however much it may have been excited or guided by them. But both Morris and Jefferson saw the futility of the application of the abstract dogma of equality and the theories of the *Social Contract* to the reconstruction of government and the reorganization of society in France.

If the aristocracy were malignant—though numbers of them were far from being so—there was also a malignant prejudice aroused against them, and M. Taine is not far wrong when he says of this prejudice, “Its hard, dry kernel consists of the abstract idea of equality.” \* Taine’s *French Revolution* is cynical, and, with all its accumulation of material, omits some facts necessary to a philosophical history ; but a passage following that quoted is worth reproducing in this connection : “The

\* *The French Revolution*. By H. A. Taine. Vol. i., bk. ii., chap. ii., sec. iii. Translation. New York : Henry Holt & Co.

treatment of the nobles of the Assembly is the same as the treatment of the Protestants by Louis XIV. . . . One hundred thousand Frenchmen driven out at the end of the seventeenth century, and one hundred thousand driven out at the end of the eighteenth! Mark how an intolerant democracy completes the work of an intolerant monarchy! The moral aristocracy was mowed down in the name of uniformity; the social aristocracy is mowed down in the name of equality. For the second time an abstract principle, and with the same effect, buries its blade in the heart of a living society.”

Notwithstanding the world-wide advertisement of the French experiment, it has taken almost a century for the dogma of equality, at least outside of France, to filter down from the speculative thinkers into a general popular acceptance, as an active principle to be used in the shaping of affairs, and to become more potent in the popular mind than tradition or habit. The attempt is made to apply it to society with a brutal logic; and we might despair as to the result, if we did not know that the world is not ruled by logic. Nothing is so fascinating in the hands of the half-informed as a neat dogma; it seems the

perfect key to all difficulties. The formula is applied in contempt and ignorance of the past, as if building up were as easy as pulling down, and as if society were a machine to be moved by mechanical appliances, and not a living organism composed of distinct and sensitive beings. Along with the spread of a belief in the uniformity of natural law has unfortunately gone a suggestion of parallelism of the moral law to it, and a notion that if we can discover the right formula, human society and government can be organized with a mathematical justice to all the parts. By many the dogma of equality is held to be that formula, and relief from the greater evils of the social state is expected from its logical extension.

Let us now consider some of the present movements and tendencies that are related, more or less, to this belief:

I. Absolute equality is seen to depend upon absolute supremacy of the state. Professor Henry Fawcett says, "Excessive dependence on the state is the most prominent characteristic of modern socialism." "These proposals to prohibit inheritance, to abolish private property, and to make the state the owner of all the capital and the administrator of the entire industry of the country are put forward as rep-

resenting socialism in its ultimate and highest development." \*

Society and government should be recast till they conform to the theory, or, let us say, to its exaggerations. Men can unmake what they have made. There is no higher authority anywhere than the will of the majority, no matter what the majority is in intellect and morals. Fifty-one ignorant men have a natural right to legislate for the one hundred, as against forty-nine intelligent men.

All men being equal, one man is as fit to legislate and execute as another. A recently elected Congressman from Maine vehemently repudiated in a public address, as a slander, the accusation that he was educated. The theory was that, uneducated, he was the proper representative of the average ignorance of his district, and that ignorance ought to be represented in the legislature in kind. The ignorant know better what they want than the educated know for them. "Their education [that of college men] destroys natural perception and judgment; so that cultivated people are one-sided, and their judgment is

\* "Socialism in Germany and the United States," *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1878.

often inferior to that of the working people." "Cultured people have made up their minds, and are hard to move." "No lawyer should be elected to a place in any legislative body."\*

Experience is of no account, neither is history, nor tradition, nor the accumulated wisdom of ages. On all questions of political economy, finance, morals, the ignorant man stands on a par with the best informed as a legislator. We might cite any number of the results of these illusions. A member of a recent House of Representatives declared that we "can repair the losses of the war by the issue of a sufficient amount of paper money." An intelligent mechanic of our acquaintance, a leader among the Nationals, urging the theory of his party, that banks should be destroyed, and that the government should issue to the people as much "paper money" as they need, denied the right of banks or of any individuals to charge interest on money. Yet he would take rent for the house he owns.

Laws must be the direct expression of the will of the majority, and be altered solely on its will. It would be well, therefore, to have

\*Opinions of working-men, reported in "The Nationals, their Origin and their Aims," *The Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1878.



a continuous election, so that, any day, the electors can change their representative for a new man. “If my *caprice* be the source of law, then my *enjoyment* may be the source of the division of the nation’s resources.” \*

Property is the creator of inequality, and this factor in our artificial state can be eliminated only by absorption. It is the duty of the government to provide for all the people, and the sovereign people will see to it that it does. The election franchise is a natural right—a man’s weapon to protect himself. It may be asked, If it is just this, and not a sacred trust accorded to be exercised for the benefit of society, why may not a man sell it, if it is for his interest to do so?

What is there illogical in these positions from the premise given? “Communism,” says Roscher,† “is the logically not inconsistent exaggeration of the principle of equality. Men who hear themselves designated as ‘the sovereign people,’ and their welfare as the supreme law of the state, are more apt than others to feel more keenly the distance which separates their own misery from the super-

\* Stahl’s *Rechtsphilosophie*, quoted by Roscher.

† *Political Economy*, bk. i., ch. v., § 78.

abundance of others. And, indeed, to what an extent our physical wants are determined by our intellectual mould !”

The tendency of the exaggeration of man's will as the foundation of government is distinctly materialistic ; it is a self-sufficiency that shuts out God and the higher law.\* We need to remember that the Creator of man, and not man himself, formed society and instituted government ; that God is always behind human society and sustains it ; that marriage and the family and all social relations are divinely established ; that man's duty, coinciding

\* “ And, indeed, if the will of man is all-powerful, if states are to be distinguished from one another only by their boundaries, if everything may be changed like the scenery in a play by a flourish of the magic wand of a system, if man may arbitrarily make the right, if nations can be put through evolutions like regiments of troops, what a field would the world present for attempts at the realizations of the wildest dreams, and what a temptation would be offered to take possession, by main force, of the government of human affairs, to destroy the rights of property and the rights of capital, to gratify ardent longings without trouble, and to provide the much-coveted means of enjoyment ! The Titans have tried to scale the heavens, and have fallen into the most degrading materialism. Purely speculative dogmatism sinks into materialism.” (M. Wolowski's *Essay on the Historical Method*, prefixed to his translation of Roscher's *Political Economy*.)

with his right, is, by the light of history, by experience, by observation of men, and by the aid of revelation, to find out and make operative, as well as he can, the divine law in human affairs. And it may be added that the sovereignty of the people, as a divine trust, may be as logically deduced from the divine institution of government as the old divine right of kings. Government, by whatever name it is called, is a matter of experience and expediency. If we submit to the will of the majority, it is because it is more convenient to do so; and if the republic or the democracy vindicate itself, it is because it works best, on the whole, for a particular people. But it needs no prophet to say that it will not work long if God is shut out from it, and man, in a full-blown socialism, is considered the ultimate authority.

II. Equality of education. In our American system there is, not only theoretically but practically, an equality of opportunity in the public schools, which are free to all children, and rise by gradations from the primaries to the high-schools, in which the curriculum in most respects equals, and in variety exceeds, that of many third-class “colleges.” In these schools nearly the whole round of learning, in

languages, science, and art, is touched. The system has seemed to be the best that could be devised for a free society, where all take part in the government, and where so much depends upon the intelligence of the electors. Certain objections, however, have been made to it. As this essay is intended only to be tentative, we shall state some of them, without indulging in lengthy comments.

(1.) The first charge is superficiality—a necessary consequence of attempting too much—and a want of adequate preparation for special pursuits in life.

(2.) A uniformity in mediocrity is alleged from the use of the same text-books and methods in all schools, for all grades and capacities. This is one of the most common criticisms on our social state by a certain class of writers in England, who take an unflagging interest in our development. One answer to it is this: There is more reason to expect variety of development and character in a generally educated than in an ignorant community; there is no such uniformity as the dull level of ignorance.

(3.) It is said that secular education—and the general schools open to all in a community of mixed religions must be secular—is train-

ing the rising generation to be materialists and socialists.

(4.) Perhaps a better-founded charge is that a system of equal education, with its superficiality, creates discontent with the condition in which a majority of men must be—that of labor—a distaste for trades and for hand-work, an idea that what is called intellectual labor (let us say, casting up accounts in a shop, or writing trashy stories for a sensational newspaper) is more honorable than physical labor; and encourages the false notion that “the elevation of the working classes” implies the removal of men and women from those classes.

We should hesitate to draw adverse conclusions in regard to a system yet so young that its results cannot be fairly estimated. Only after two or three generations can its effects upon the character of a great people be measured. Observations differ, and testimony is difficult to obtain. We think it safe to say that those states are most prosperous which have the best free schools. But if the philosopher inquires as to the general effect upon the national character in respect to the objections named, he must wait for a reply.

III. The pursuit of the chimera of social equality, from the belief that it should logi-

cally follow political equality; resulting in extravagance, misapplication of natural capacities, a notion that physical labor is dishonorable, or that the state should compel all to labor alike, and in efforts to remove inequalities of condition by legislation.

IV. The equality of the sexes. The stir in the middle of the eighteenth century gave a great impetus to the emancipation of woman; though, curiously enough, Rousseau, in unfolding his plan of education for Sophie, in *Émile*, inculcates an almost Oriental subjection of woman—her education simply that she may please man. The true enfranchisement of woman—that is, the recognition (by herself as well as by man) of her real place in the economy of the world, in the full development of her capacities—is the greatest gain to civilization since the Christian era. The movement has its excesses, and the gain has not been without loss. “When we turn to modern literature,” writes Mr. Morley, “from the pages in which Fénelon speaks of the education of girls, who does not feel that the world has lost a sacred accent—that some ineffable essence has passed out from our hearts?”

How far the expectation has been realized that women, in fiction, for instance, would be

more accurately described, better understood, and appear as nobler and lovelier beings when women wrote the novels, this is not the place to inquire. The movement has results which are unavoidable in a period of transition, and probably only temporary. The education of woman and the development of her powers hold the greatest promise for the regeneration of society. But this development, yet in its infancy, and pursued with much crudeness and misconception of the end, is not enough. Woman would not only be equal with man, but would be like him; that is, perform in society the functions he now performs. Here, again, the notion of equality is pushed towards uniformity. The reformers admit structural differences in the sexes, though these, they say, are greatly exaggerated by subjection; but the functional differences are mainly to be eliminated. Women ought to mingle in all the occupations of men, as if the physical differences did not exist. The movement goes to obliterate, as far as possible, the distinction between sexes. Nature is, no doubt, amused at this attempt. A recent writer\* says: “The

\* “Biology and Woman's Rights,” *Quarterly Journal of Science*, November, 1878.

*femme libre* [free woman] of the new social order may, indeed, escape the charge of neglecting her family and her household by contending that it is not her vocation to become a wife and a mother! Why, then, we ask, is she constituted a woman at all? Merely that she may become a sort of second-rate man?"

The truth is that this movement, based always upon a misconception of equality, so far as it would change the duties of the sexes, is a retrograde.\* One of the most striking features

\* "It has been frequently observed that among declining nations the social differences between the two sexes are first obliterated, and afterwards even the intellectual differences. The more masculine the women become, the more effeminate become the men. It is no good symptom when there are almost as many female writers and female rulers as there are male. Such was the case, for instance, in the Hellenistic kingdoms, and in the age of the Cæsars. What to-day is called by many the emancipation of woman would ultimately end in the dissolution of the family, and, if carried out, render poor service to the majority of women. If man and woman were placed entirely on the same level, and if in the competition between the two sexes nothing but an actual superiority should decide, it is to be feared that woman would soon be relegated to a condition as hard as that in which she is found among all barbarous nations. It is precisely family life and higher civilization that have emancipated woman. Those theorists who, led astray by the dark side of higher civilization, preach a community of goods, generally contemplate



in our progress from barbarism to civilization is the proper adjustment of the work for men and women. One test of a civilization is the difference of this work. This is a question not merely of division of labor, but of differentiation with regard to sex. It not only takes into account structural differences and physiological disadvantages, but it recognizes the finer and higher use of woman in society.

The attainable, not to say the ideal, society requires an increase rather than a decrease of the differences between the sexes. The differences may be due to physical organization, but the structural divergence is but a faint type of deeper separation in mental and spiritual constitution. That which makes the charm and power of woman, that for which she is created, is as distinctly feminine as that which makes the charm and power of men is masculine. Progress requires constant differentiation, and the line of this is the development of each sex in its special functions, each being true to the

in their simultaneous recommendation of the emancipation of woman a more or less developed form of a community of wives. The grounds of the two institutions are very similar.” (Roscher’s *Political Economy*, § 250). Note also that difference in costumes of the sexes is least apparent among lowly civilized peoples.

highest ideal for itself, which is not that the woman should be a man, or the man a woman. The enjoyment of social life rests very largely upon the encounter and play of the subtle peculiarities which mark the two sexes; and society, in the limited sense of the word, not less than the whole structure of our civilization, requires the development of these peculiarities. It is in diversity, and not in an equality tending to uniformity, that we are to expect the best results from the race.

V. Equality of races; or rather a removal of the inequalities, social and political, arising in the contact of different races by intermarriage.

Perhaps equality is hardly the word to use here, since uniformity is the thing aimed at; but the root of the proposal is in the dogma we are considering. The tendency of the age is to uniformity. The facilities of travel and communication, the new inventions and the use of machinery in manufacturing, bring men into close and uniform relations, and induce the disappearance of national characteristics and of race peculiarities. Men, the world over are getting to dress alike, eat alike, and disbelieve in the same things. It is the sentimental complaint of the traveller that his

search for the picturesque is ever more difficult, that race distinctions and habits are in a way to be improved off the face of the earth, and that a most uninteresting monotony is supervening. The complaint is not wholly sentimental, and has a deeper philosophical reason than the mere pleasure in variety on this planet.

We find a striking illustration of the equalizing, not to say levelling, tendency of the age in an able paper by Canon George Rawlinson, of the University of Oxford, contributed recently to an American periodical of a high class and conservative character.\* This paper proposes, as a remedy for the social and political evils caused by the negro element in our population, the miscegenation of the white and black races, to the end that the black race may be wholly absorbed in the white—an absorption of four millions by thirty-six millions, which he thinks might reasonably be expected in about a century, when the lower type would disappear altogether.

Perhaps the pleasure of being absorbed is not equal to the pleasure of absorbing, and we

\* “Duties of Higher towards Lower Races.” By George Rawlinson. *Princeton Review*. November, 1878. New York.

cannot say how this proposal will commend itself to the victims of the euthanasia. The results of miscegenation on this continent—black with red, and white with black—the results morally, intellectually, and physically, are not such as to make it attractive to the American people.

It is not, however, upon sentimental grounds that we oppose this extension of the exaggerated dogma of equality. Our objection is deeper. Race distinctions ought to be maintained for the sake of the best development of the race, and for the continuance of that mutual reaction and play of peculiar forces between races which promise the highest development for the whole. It is not for nothing, we may suppose, that differentiation has gone on in the world; and we doubt that either benevolence or self-interest requires this age to attempt to restore an assumed lost uniformity, and fuse the race traits in a tiresome homogeneity.

Life consists in an exchange of relations, and the more varied the relations interchanged the higher the life. We want not only different races, but different civilizations in different parts of the globe.

A much more philosophical view of the African problem and the proper destiny of the

negro race than that of Canon Rawlinson is given by a recent colored writer,\* an official in the government of Liberia. We are mistaken, says this excellent observer, in regarding Africa as a land of a homogeneous population, and in confounding the tribes in a promiscuous manner. There are negroes and negroes. “The numerous tribes inhabiting the vast continent of Africa can no more be regarded as in every respect equal than the numerous peoples of Asia or Europe can be so regarded;” and we are not to expect the civilization of Africa to be under one government, but in a great variety of states, developed according to tribal and race affinities. A still greater mistake is this :

“The mistake which Europeans often make in considering questions of negro improvement and the future of Africa is in supposing that the negro is the European in embryo, in the undeveloped stage, and that when, by-and-by, he shall enjoy the advantages of civilization and culture, he will become like the European ; in other words, that the negro is on the same line of progress, in the same groove, with the European, but infinitely in the rear. . . . This

\* “Africa and the Africans.” By Edmund W. Blyden. *Fraser's Magazine*, August, 1878.

view proceeds upon the assumption that the two races are called to the same work, and are alike in potentiality and ultimate development, the negro only needing the element of time, under certain circumstances, to become European. But to our mind it is not a question between the two races of inferiority or superiority. There is no absolute or essential superiority on the one side, or absolute or essential inferiority on the other side. It is a question of difference of endowment and difference of destiny. No amount of training or culture will make the negro a European. On the other hand, no lack of training or deficiency of culture will make the European a negro. The two races are not moving in the same groove, with an immeasurable distance between them, but on parallel lines. They will never meet in the plane of their activities so as to coincide in capacity or performance. They are not *identical*, as some think, but *unequal*; they are *distinct*, but *equal*—an idea that is in no way incompatible with the Scripture truth that God hath made of one blood all nations of men."

The writer goes on, in a strain that is not mere fancy, but that involves one of the truths of inequality, to say that each race is endowed

with peculiar talents; that the negro has aptitudes and capacities which the world needs, and will lack until he is normally trained. In the grand symphony of the universe, “there are several sounds not yet brought out, and the feeblest of all is that hitherto produced by the negro; but he alone can furnish it.” “When the African shall come forward with his peculiar gifts, they will fill a place never before occupied.” In short, the African must be civilized in the line of his capacities. “The present practice of the friends of Africa is to frame laws according to their own notions for the government and improvement of this people, whereas God has already enacted the laws for the government of their affairs, which laws should be carefully ascertained, interpreted, and applied; for until they are found out and conformed to, all labor will be ineffective and resultless.”

We have thus passed in review some of the tendencies of the age. We have only touched the edges of a vast subject, and shall be quite satisfied if we have suggested thought in the direction indicated. But in this limited view of our complex human problem it is time to ask if we have not pushed the dogma of equality far enough. Is it not time to look the

facts squarely in the face, and conform to them in our efforts for social and political amelioration?

Inequality appears to be the divine order; it always has existed; undoubtedly it will continue; all our theories and *a priori* speculations will not change the nature of things. Even inequality of condition is the basis of progress, the incentive to exertion. Fortunately, if to-day we could make every man white, every woman as like man as nature permits, give to every human being the same opportunity of education, and divide equally among all the accumulated wealth of the world, to-morrow differences, unequal possession, and differentiation would begin again. We are attempting the regeneration of society with a misleading phase; we are wasting our time with a theory that does not fit the facts.

There is an equality, but it is not of outward show; it is independent of condition; it does not destroy property, nor ignore the difference of sex, nor obliterate race traits. It is the equality of men before God, of men before the law; it is the equal honor of all honorable labor. No more pernicious notion ever obtained lodgement in society than the common one that to "rise in the world" is necessarily



to change the “condition.” Let there be content with condition ; discontent with individual ignorance and imperfection. “We want,” says Emerson, “not a farmer, but a man on a farm.” What a mischievous idea is that which has grown, even in the United States, that manual labor is discreditable ! There is surely some defect in the theory of equality in our society which makes domestic service to be shunned as if it were a disgrace.

It must be observed, further, that the dogma of equality is not satisfied by the usual admission that one is in favor of an equality of rights and opportunities, but is against the sweeping application of the theory made by the socialists and communists. The obvious reply is that equal rights and a fair chance are not possible without equality of condition, and that property and the whole artificial constitution of society necessitate inequality of condition. The damage from the current exaggeration of equality is that the attempt to realize the dogma in fact—and the attempt is everywhere on foot—can lead only to mischief and disappointment.

It would be considered a humorous suggestion to advocate inequality as a theory or as a working dogma. Let us recognize it, however,

as a fact, and shape the efforts for the improvement of the race in accordance with it, encouraging it in some directions, restraining it from injustice in others. Working by this recognition, we shall save the race from many failures and bitter disappointments, and spare the world the spectacle of republics ending in despotism and experiments in government ending in anarchy.

(1880.)

WHAT IS YOUR CULTURE TO ME?



## WHAT IS YOUR CULTURE TO ME?\*

TWENTY-ONE years ago in this house I heard a voice calling me to ascend the platform, and there to stand and deliver. The voice was the voice of President North; the language was an excellent imitation of that used by Cicero and Julius Cæsar. I remember the flattering invitation—it is the classic tag that clings to the graduate long after he has forgotten the gender of the nouns that end in *um*—*orator proximus*, the grateful voice said, *ascendat, videlicet*, and so forth. To be proclaimed an orator, and an ascending orator, in such a sonorous tongue, in the face of a world waiting for orators, stirred one's blood like the herald's trumpet when the lists are thrown open. Alas! for most of us, who crowded so eagerly into the arena, it was the last appearance as orators on any stage.

The facility of the world for swallowing up

\* Delivered before the Alumni of Hamilton College, Clinton, N. Y., Wednesday, June 26th, 1872.

orators, and company after company of educated young men, has been remarked. But it is almost incredible to me now that the class of 1851, with its classic sympathies and its many revolutionary ideas, disappeared in the flood of the world so soon and so silently, causing scarcely a ripple in the smoothly flowing stream. I suppose the phenomenon has been repeated for twenty years. Do the young gentlemen at Hamilton, I wonder, still carry on their ordinary conversation in the Latin tongue, and their familiar vacation correspondence in the language of Aristophanes? I hope so. I hope they are more proficient in such exercises than the young gentlemen of twenty years ago were, for I have still great faith in a culture that is so far from any sordid aspiration as to approach the ideal; although the young graduate is not long in learning that there is an indifference in the public mind with regard to the first aorist that amounts nearly to apathy, and that millions of his fellow-creatures will probably live and die without the consolations of the second aorist. It is a melancholy fact that, after a thousand years of missionary effort, the vast majority of civilized men do not know that *gerunds* are found only in the singular number.

I confess that this failure of the annual graduating class to make its expected impression on the world has its pathetic side. Youth is credulous—as it always ought to be—and full of hope—else the world were dead already—and the graduate steps out into life with an ingenuous self-confidence in his resources. It is to him an event, this turning-point in the career of what he feels to be an important and immortal being. His entrance is public and with some dignity of display. For a day the world stops to see it; the newspapers spread abroad a report of it, and the modest scholar feels that the eyes of mankind are fixed on him in expectation and desire. Though modest, he is not insensible to the responsibility of his position. He has only packed away in his mind the wisdom of the ages, and he does not intend to be stingy about communicating it to the world which is awaiting his graduation. Fresh from the communion with great thoughts in great literatures, he is in haste to give mankind the benefit of them, and lead it on into new enthusiasm and new conquests.

The world, however, is not very much excited. The birth of a child is in itself marvellous, but it is so common. Over and over again, for hundreds of years, these young gentlemen

have been coming forward with their specimens of learning tied up in neat little parcels, all ready to administer, and warranted to be of the purest materials. The world is not unkind, it is not even indifferent, but it must be confessed that it does not act any longer as if it expected to be enlightened. It is generally so busy that it does not even ask the young gentlemen what they can do, but leaves them standing with their little parcels, wondering when the person will pass by who requires one of them, and when there will happen a little opening in the procession into which they can fall. They expected that way would be made for them with shouts of welcome, but they find themselves before long struggling to get even a standing-place in the crowd—it is only kings, and the nobility, and those fortunates who dwell in the tropics, where bread grows on trees and clothing is unnecessary, who have reserved seats in this world.

To the majority of men I fancy that literature is very much the same that history is; and history is presented as a museum of antiquities and curiosities, classified, arranged, and labelled. One may walk through it as he does through the Hotel de Cluny; he feels that he ought to be interested in it, but it is very tiresome.



Learning is regarded in like manner as an accumulation of literature, gathered into great storehouses called libraries—the thought of which excites great respect in most minds, but is ineffably tedious. Year after year and age after age it accumulates—this evidence and monument of intellectual activity—piling itself up in vast collections, which it needs a lifetime even to catalogue, and through which the uncultured walk as the idle do through the British Museum, with no very strong indignation against Omar who burned the library at Alexandria.

To the popular mind this vast accumulation of learning in libraries, or in brains that do not visibly apply it, is much the same thing. The business of the scholar appears to be this sort of accumulation; and the young student, who comes to the world with a little portion of this treasure dug out of some classic tomb or mediæval museum, is received with little more enthusiasm than is the miraculous handkerchief of St. Veronica by the crowd of Protestants to whom it is exhibited on Holy Week in St. Peter's. The historian must make his museum live again; the scholar must vivify his learning with a present purpose.

It is unnecessary for me to say that all this

is only from the unsympathetic and worldly side. I should think myself a criminal if I said anything to chill the enthusiasm of the young scholar, or to dash with any scepticism his longing and his hope. He has chosen the highest. His beautiful faith and his aspiration are the light of life. Without his fresh enthusiasm and his gallant devotion to learning, to art, to culture, the world would be dreary enough. Through him comes the ever-springing inspiration in affairs. Baffled at every turn and driven defeated from a hundred fields, he carries victory in himself. He belongs to a great and immortal army. Let him not be discouraged at his apparent little influence, even though every sally of every young life may seem like a forlorn-hope. No man can see the whole of the battle. It must needs be that regiment after regiment, trained, accomplished, gay, and high with hope, shall be sent into the field, marching on, into the smoke, into the fire, and be swept away. The battle swallows them, one after the other, and the foe is yet unyielding, and the ever-remorseless trumpet calls for more and more. But not in vain, for some day, and every day, along the line, there is a cry, "They fly! they fly!" and the whole army advances, and the flag is plant-

ed on an ancient fortress where it never waved before. And, even if you never see this, better than inglorious camp-following is it to go in with the wasting regiment; to carry the colors up the slope of the enemy's works, though the next moment you fall and find a grave at the foot of the glacis.

What are the relations of culture to common life, of the scholar to the day-laborer? What is the value of this vast accumulation of higher learning, what is its point of contact with the mass of humanity, that toils and eats and sleeps and reproduces itself and dies, generation after generation, in an unvarying round, on an unvarying level? We have had discussed lately the relation of culture to religion. Mr. Froude, with a singular, reactionary ingenuity, has sought to prove that the progress of the century, so-called, with all its material alleviations, has done little in regard to a happy life, to the pleasure of existence, for the average individual Englishman. Into neither of these inquiries do I purpose to enter; but we may not unprofitably turn our attention to a subject closely connected with both of them.

It has not escaped your attention that there are indications everywhere of what may be called a ground-swell. There is not simply an

inquiry as to the value of classic culture, a certain jealousy of the schools where it is obtained, a rough popular contempt for the graces of learning, a failure to see any connection between the first aorist and the rolling of steel rails, but there is arising an angry protest against the conditions of a life which make one free of the serene heights of thought and give him range of all intellectual countries, and keep another at the spade and the loom, year after year, that he may earn food for the day and lodging for the night. In our day the demand here hinted at has taken more definite form and determinate aim, and goes on, visible to all men, to unsettle society and change social and political relations. The great movement of labor, extravagant and preposterous as are some of its demands, demagogic as are most of its leaders, fantastic as are many of its theories, is nevertheless real, and gigantic, and full of a certain primeval force, and with a certain justice in it that never sleeps in human affairs, but moves on, blindly often and destructively often, a movement cruel at once and credulous, deceived and betrayed, and revenging itself on friends and foes alike. Its strength is in the fact that it is natural and human; it might have been predicted from a

mere knowledge of human nature, which is always restless in any relations it is possible to establish, which is always like the sea, seeking a level, and never so discontented as when anything like a level is approximated.

What is the relation of the scholar to the present phase of this movement? What is the relation of culture to it? By scholar I mean the man who has had the advantages of such an institution as this. By culture I mean that fine product of opportunity and scholarship which is to mere knowledge what manners are to the gentleman. The world has a growing belief in the profit of knowledge, of information, but it has a suspicion of culture. There is a lingering notion in matters religious that something is lost by refinement—at least, that there is danger that the plain, blunt, essential truths will be lost in æsthetic graces. The laborer is getting to consent that his son shall go to school, and learn how to build an under-shot wheel or to assay metals; but why plant in his mind those principles of taste which will make him as sensitive to beauty as to pain, why open to him those realms of imagination with the illimitable horizons, the contours and colors of which can but fill him with indefinite longing?

It is not necessary for me in this presence to dwell upon the value of culture. I wish rather to have you notice the gulf that exists between what the majority want to know and that fine fruit of knowledge concerning which there is so widespread an infidelity. Will culture aid a minister in a "protracted meeting"? Will the ability to read Chaucer assist a shop-keeper? Will the politician add to the "sweetness and light" of his lovely career if he can read the "Battle of the Frogs and the Mice" in the original? What has the farmer to do with the "Rose Garden of Saadi"?

I suppose it is not altogether the fault of the majority that the true relation of culture to common life is so misunderstood. The scholar is largely responsible for it; he is largely responsible for the isolation of his position, and the want of sympathy it begets. No man can influence his fellows with any power who retires into his own selfishness, and gives himself to a self-culture which has no further object. What is he that he should absorb the sweets of the universe, that he should hold all the claims of humanity second to the perfecting of himself? This effort to save his own soul was common to Goethe and Francis of Assisi; under different manifesta-

tions it was the same regard for self. And where it is an intellectual and not a spiritual greediness, I suppose it is what an old writer calls "laying up treasures in hell."

It is not an unreasonable demand of the majority that the few who have the advantages of the training of college and university should exhibit the breadth and sweetness of a generous culture, and should shed everywhere that light which ennobles common things, and without which life is like one of the old landscapes in which the artist forgot to put sunlight. One of the reasons why the college-bred man does not meet this reasonable expectation is that his training, too often, has not been thorough and conscientious, it has not been of himself; he has acquired, but he is not educated. Another is that, if he is educated, he is not impressed with the intimacy of his relation to that which is below him as well as that which is above him, and his culture is out of sympathy with the great mass that needs it, and must have it, or it will remain a blind force in the world, the lever of demagogues who preach social anarchy and misname it progress. There is no culture so high, no taste so fastidious, no grace of learning so delicate, no refinement of

art so exquisite, that it cannot at this hour find full play for itself in the broadest fields of humanity; since it is all needed to soften the attritions of common life, and guide to nobler aspirations the strong materialistic influences of our restless society.

One reason, as I said, for the gulf between the majority and the select few to be educated is, that the college does not seldom disappoint the reasonable expectation concerning it. The graduate of the carpenter's shop knows how to use his tools—or used to in days before superficial training in trades became the rule. Does the college graduate know how to use his tools? Or has he to set about fitting himself for some employment, and gaining that culture, that training of himself, that utilization of his information which will make him necessary in the world? There has been a great deal of discussion whether a boy should be trained in the classics or mathematics or sciences or modern languages. I feel like saying “yes” to all the various propositions. For Heaven's sake train him in something, so that he can handle himself, and have free and confident use of his powers. There isn't a more helpless creature in the universe than a scholar with a vast amount of informa-



tion over which he has no control. He is like a man with a load of hay so badly put upon his cart that it all slides off before he can get to market. The influence of a man on the world is generally proportioned to his ability to do something. When Abraham Lincoln was running for the Legislature the first time, on the platform of the improvement of the navigation of the Sangamon River, he went to secure the votes of thirty men who were cradling a wheat field. They asked no questions about internal improvements, but only seemed curious whether Abraham had muscle enough to represent them in the Legislature. The obliging man took up a cradle and led the gang round the field. The whole thirty voted for him.

What is scholarship? The learned Hindu can repeat I do not know how many thousands of lines from the Vedas, and perhaps backwards as well as forwards. I heard of an excellent old lady who had counted how many times the letter A occurs in the Holy Scriptures. The Chinese students who aspire to honors spend years in verbally memorizing the classics—Confucius and Mencius—and receive degrees and public advancement upon ability to transcribe from memory without

the error of a point, or misplacement of a single tea-chest character, the whole of some books of morals. You do not wonder that China is to-day more like an herbarium than anything else. Learning is a kind of fetish, and it has no influence whatever upon the great inert mass of Chinese humanity.

I suppose it is possible for a young gentleman to be able to read—just think of it, after ten years of grammar and lexicon, not to know Greek literature and have flexible command of all its richness and beauty, but to read it!—it is possible, I suppose, for the graduate of college to be able to read all the Greek authors, and yet to have gone, in regard to his own culture, very little deeper than a surface reading of them; to know very little of that perfect architecture and what it expressed; nor of that marvellous sculpture and the conditions of its immortal beauty; nor of that artistic development which made the Acropolis to bud and bloom under the blue sky like the final flower of a perfect nature; nor of that philosophy, that politics, that society, nor of the life of that polished, crafty, joyous race, the springs of it and the far-reaching, still unexpended effects of it.

Yet as surely as that nothing perishes, that the Providence of God is not a patchwork of uncontinued efforts, but a plan and a progress, as surely as the Pilgrim embarkation at Delfshaven has a relation to the battle of Gettysburg, and to the civil rights bill giving the colored man permission to ride in a public conveyance and to be buried in a public cemetery, so surely has the Parthenon some connection with your new State capitol at Albany, and the daily life of the vine-dresser of the Peloponnesus some lesson for the American day-laborer. The scholar is said to be the torch-bearer, transmitting the increasing light from generation to generation, so that the feet of all, the humblest and the lowliest, may walk in the radiance and not stumble. But he very often carries a dark lantern.

Not what is the use of Greek, of any culture in art or literature, but what is the good to me of your knowing Greek, is the latest question of the ditch-digger to the scholar—what better off am I for your learning? And the question, in view of the inter-dependence of all members of society, is one that cannot be put away as idle. One reason why the scholar does not make the world of the past,

the world of books, real to his fellows and serviceable to them, is that it is not real to himself, but a mere unsubstantial place of intellectual idleness, where he dallies some years before he begins his task in life. And another reason is that, while it may be real to him, while he is actually cultured and trained, he fails to see or to feel that his culture is not a thing apart, and that all the world has a right to share its blessed influence. Failing to see this, he is isolated, and, wanting his sympathy, the untutored world mocks at his superfineness and takes its own rough way to rougher ends. Greek art was for the people, Greek poetry was for the people; Raphael painted his immortal frescoes where throngs could be lifted in thought and feeling by them; Michael Angelo hung the dome over St. Peter's so that the far-off peasant on the Campagna could see it, and the maiden kneeling by the shrine in the Alban hills. Do we often stop to think what influence, direct or other, the scholar, the man of high culture, has to-day upon the great mass of our people? Why do they ask, what is the use of your learning and your art?

The artist, in the retirement of his studio, finishes a charming, suggestive, historical pict-

ure. The rich man buys it and hangs it in his library, where the privileged few can see it. I do not deny that the average rich man needs all the refining influence the picture can exert on him, and that the picture is doing missionary work in his house; but it is nevertheless an example of an educating influence withdrawn and appropriated to narrow uses. But the engraver comes, and, by his mediating art, transfers it to a thousand sheets, and scatters its sweet influence far abroad. All the world, in its toil, its hunger, its sordidness, pauses a moment to look on it—that gray sea-coast, the receding *May-flower*, the two young Pilgrims in the foreground regarding it, with tender thoughts of the far home—all the world looks on it perhaps for a moment thoughtfully, perhaps tearfully, and is touched with the sentiment of it, is kindled into a glow of nobleness by the sight of that faith and love and resolute devotion which have tinged our early history with the faint light of romance. So art is no longer the enjoyment of the few, but the help and solace of the many.

The scholar who is cultured by books, reflection, travel, by a refined society, consorts with his kind, and more and more removes

himself from the sympathies of common life. I know how almost inevitable this is, how almost impossible it is to resist the segregation of classes according to the affinities of taste. But by what mediation shall the culture that is now the possession of the few be made to leaven the world and to elevate and sweeten ordinary life? By books? Yes. By the newspaper? Yes. By the diffusion of works of art? Yes. But when all is done that can be done by such letters-missive from one class to another, there remains the need of more personal contact, of a human sympathy, diffused and living. The world has had enough of charities. It wants respect and consideration. We desire no longer to be legislated for, it says; we want to be legislated with. Why do you never come to see me but you bring me something? asks the sensitive and poor seamstress. Do you always give some charity to your friends? I want companionship, and not cold pieces; I want to be treated like a human being who has nerves and feelings, and tears too, and as much interest in the sunset, and in the birth of Christ, perhaps, as you. And the mass of uncared-for ignorance and brutality, finding a voice at length, bitterly repels the condescensions of charity; you have your cult-

ure, your libraries, your fine houses, your church, your religion, and your God, too; let us alone, we want none of them. In the bear-pit at Berne, the occupants, who are the wards of the city, have had meat thrown to them daily for I know not how long, but they are not tamed by this charity, and would probably eat up any careless person who fell into their clutches, without apology.

Do not impute to me quixotic notions with regard to the duties of men and women of culture, or think that I undervalue the difficulties in the way, the fastidiousness on the one side, or the jealousies on the other. It is by no means easy to an active participant to define the drift of his own age; but I seem to see plainly that unless the culture of the age finds means to diffuse itself, working downward and reconciling antagonisms by a commonness of thought and feeling and aim in life, society must more and more separate itself into jarring classes, with mutual misunderstandings and hatred and war. To suggest remedies is much more difficult than to see evils; but the comprehension of dangers is the first step towards mastering them. The problem of our own time—the reconciliation of the interests of classes—is as yet very illy defined.

This great movement of labor, for instance, does not know definitely what it wants, and those who are spectators do not know what their relations are to it. The first thing to be done is for them to try to understand each other. One class sees that the other has lighter or at least different labor, opportunities of travel, a more liberal supply of the luxuries of life, a higher enjoyment and a keener relish of the beautiful, the immaterial. Looking only at external conditions, it concludes that all it needs to come into this better place is wealth, and so it organizes war upon the rich, and it makes demands of freedom from toil and of compensation which it is in no man's power to give it, and which would not, if granted over and over again, lift it into that condition it desires. It is a tale in the Gulistan, that a king placed his son with a preceptor, and said, "This is your son; educate him in the same manner as your own." The preceptor took pains with him for a year, but without success, whilst his own sons were completed in learning and accomplishments. The king reproved the preceptor, and said, "You have broken your promise, and not acted faithfully." He replied, "O king, the education was the same, but the capacities are different. Although



silver and gold are produced from a stone, yet these metals are not to be found in every stone. The star Canopus shines all over the world, but the scented leather comes only from Yemen." "'Tis an absolute, and, as it were, a divine perfection," says Montaigne, "for a man to know how loyally to enjoy his being. We seek other conditions, by reason we do not understand the use of our own; and go out of ourselves, because we know not how there to reside."

But nevertheless it becomes a necessity for us to understand the wishes of those who demand a change of condition, and it is necessary that they should understand the compensations as well as the limitations of every condition. The dervish congratulated himself that although the only monument of his grave would be a brick, he should at the last day arrive at and enter the gate of Paradise before the king had got from under the heavy stones of his costly tomb. Nothing will bring us into this desirable mutual understanding except sympathy and personal contact. Laws will not do it; institutions of charity and relief will not do it.

We must believe, for one thing, that the graces of culture will not be thrown away if

exercised among the humblest and the least cultured; it is found out that flowers are often more welcome in the squalid tenement-houses of Boston than loaves of bread. It is difficult to say exactly how culture can extend its influence into places uncongenial and to people indifferent to it, but I will try and illustrate what I mean by an example or two.

Criminals in this country, when the law took hold of them, used to be turned over to the care of men who often had more sympathy with the crime than with the criminal, or at least to those who were almost as coarse in feeling and as brutal in speech as their charges. There have been some changes of late years in the care of criminals, but does public opinion yet everywhere demand that jailers and prison-keepers and executioners of the penal law should be men of refinement, of high character, of any degree of culture? I do not know any class more needing the best direct personal influence of the best civilization than the criminal. The problem of its proper treatment and reformation is one of the most pressing, and it needs practically the aid of our best men and women. I should have great hope of any prison establishment at the head of which was a gentleman of fine education, the purest tastes, the most

elevated morality and lively sympathy with men as such, provided he had also will and the power of command. I do not know what might not be done for the viciously inclined and the transgressors, if they could come under the influence of refined men and women. And yet you know that a boy or a girl may be arrested for crime, and pass from officer to keeper, and jailer to warden, and spend years in a career of vice and imprisonment, and never once see any man or woman, officially, who has tastes, or sympathies, or aspirations much above that vulgar level whence the criminals came. Anybody who is honest and vigilant is considered good enough to take charge of prison birds.

The age is merciful and abounds in charities—houses of refuge for poor women, societies for the conservation of the exposed and the reclamation of the lost. It is willing to pay liberally for their support, and to hire ministers and distributors of its benefactions. But it is beginning to see that it cannot hire the distribution of love, nor buy brotherly feeling. The most encouraging thing I have seen lately is an experiment in one of our cities. In the thick of the town the ladies of the city have furnished and opened a reading-

room, sewing-room, conversation-room, or what not, where young girls, who work for a living and have no opportunity for any culture, at home or elsewhere, may spend their evenings. They meet there always some of the ladies I have spoken of, whose unostentatious duty and pleasure it is to pass the evening with them, in reading or music or the use of the needle, and the exchange of the courtesies of life in conversation. Whatever grace and kindness and refinement of manner they carry there, I do not suppose are wasted. These are some of the ways in which culture can serve men. And I take it that one of the chief evidences of our progress in this century is the recognition of the truth that there is no selfishness so supreme—not even that in the possession of wealth—as that which retires into itself with all the accomplishments of liberal learning and rare opportunities, and looks upon the intellectual poverty of the world without a wish to relieve it. “As often as I have been among men,” says Seneca, “I have returned less a man.” And Thomas à Kempis declared that “the greatest saints avoided the company of men as much as they could, and chose to live to God in secret.” The Christian philosophy

was no improvement upon the pagan in this respect, and was exactly at variance with the teaching and practice of Jesus of Nazareth.

The American scholar cannot afford to live for himself, nor merely for scholarship and the delights of learning. He must make himself more felt in the material life of this country. I am aware that it is said that the culture of the age is itself materialistic, and that its refinements are sensual; that there is little to choose between the coarse excesses of poverty and the polished and more decorous animality of the more fortunate. Without entering directly upon the consideration of this much-talked-of tendency, I should like to notice the influence upon our present and probable future of the bounty, fertility, and extraordinary opportunities of this still new land.

The American grows and develops himself with few restraints. Foreigners used to describe him as a lean, hungry, nervous animal, gaunt, inquisitive, inventive, restless, and certain to shrivel into physical inferiority in his dry and highly oxygenated atmosphere. The apprehension is not well founded. It is quieted by his achievements the continent over, his virile enterprises, his endurance in

war and in the most difficult explorations, his resistance of the influence of great cities towards effeminacy and loss of physical vigor. If ever man took large and eager hold of earthly things and appropriated them to his own use, it is the American. We are gross eaters, we are great drinkers. We shall excel the English when we have as long practice as they. I am filled with a kind of dismay when I see the great stock-yards of Chicago and Cincinnati, through which flow the vast herds and droves of the prairies, marching straight down the throats of Eastern people. Thousands are always sowing and reaping and brewing and distilling, to slake the immortal thirst of the country. We take, indeed, strong hold of the earth; we absorb its fatness. When Leicester entertained Elizabeth at Kenilworth, the clock in the great tower was set perpetually at twelve, the hour of feasting. It is always dinner-time in America. I do not know how much land it takes to raise an average citizen, but I should say a quarter section. He spreads himself abroad, he riots in abundance; above all things he must have profusion, and he wants things that are solid and strong.

On the Sorrentine promontory, and on the

island of Capri, the hardy husbandman and fisherman draws his subsistence from the sea and from a scant patch of ground. One may feast on a fish and a handful of olives. The dinner of the laborer is a dish of polenta, a few figs, some cheese, a glass of thin wine. His wants are few and easily supplied. He is not overfed, his diet is not stimulating; I should say that he would pay little to the physician, that familiar of other countries whose family office is to counteract the effects of over-eating. He is temperate, frugal, content, and apparently draws not more of his life from the earth or the sea than from the genial sky. He would never build a Pacific Railway, nor write a hundred volumes of commentary on the Scriptures; but he is an example of how little a man actually needs of the gross products of the earth.

I suppose that life was never fuller in certain ways than it is here in America. If a civilization is judged by its wants, we are certainly highly civilized. We cannot get land enough, nor clothes enough, nor houses enough, nor food enough. A Bedouin tribe would fare sumptuously on what one American family consumes and wastes. The revenue required for the wardrobe of one woman of fash-

ion would suffice to convert the inhabitants of I know not how many square miles in Africa. It absorbs the income of a province to bring up a baby. We riot in prodigality, we vie with each other in material accumulation and expense. Our thoughts are mainly on how to increase the products of the world, and get them into our own possession.

I think this gross material tendency is strong in America, and more likely to get the mastery over the spiritual and the intellectual here than elsewhere, because of our exhaustless resources. Let us not mistake the nature of a real civilization, nor suppose we have it because we can convert crude iron into the most delicate mechanism, or transport ourselves sixty miles an hour, or even if we shall refine our carnal tastes so as to be satisfied at dinner with the tongues of ortolans and the breasts of singing-birds.

Plato banished the musicians from his feasts because he would not have the charms of conversation interfered with. By comparison, music was to him a sensuous enjoyment. In any society the ideal must be the banishment of the more sensuous; the refinement of it will only repeat the continued experiment of history—the end of a civilization in a polished



materialism, and its speedy fall from that into grossness.

I am sure that the scholar, trained to "plain living and high thinking," knows that the prosperous life consists in the culture of the man, and not in the refinement and accumulation of the material. The word culture is often used to signify that dainty intellectualism which is merely a sensuous pampering of the mind, as distinguishable from the healthy training of the mind as is the education of the body in athletic exercises from the petting of it by luxurious baths and unguents. Culture is the blossom of knowledge, but it is a fruit blossom, the ornament of the age but the seed of the future. The so-called culture, a mere fastidiousness of taste, is a barren flower.

You would expect spurious culture to stand aloof from common life, as it does, to extend its charities at the end of a pole, to make of religion a mere *cultus*, to construct for its heaven a sort of Paris, where all the inhabitants dress becomingly, and where there are no Communists. Culture, like fine manners, is not always the result of wealth or position. When monseigneur the archbishop makes his rare tour through the Swiss mountains, the simple peasants do not crowd upon him

with boorish impudence, but strew his stony path with flowers, and receive him with joyous but modest sincerity. When the Russian prince made his landing in America the determined staring of a bevy of accomplished American women nearly swept the young man off the deck of the vessel. One cannot but respect that tremulous sensitiveness which caused the maiden lady to shrink from staring at the moon when she heard there was a man in it.

The materialistic drift of this age—that is, its devotion to material development—is frequently deplored. I suppose it is like all other ages in that respect, but there appears to be a more determined demand for change of condition than ever before, and a deeper movement for equalization. Here in America this is, in great part, a movement for merely physical or material equalization. The idea seems to be wellnigh universal that the millennium is to come by a great deal less work and a great deal more pay. It seems to me that the millennium is to come by an infusion into all society of a truer culture, which is neither of poverty nor of wealth, but is the beautiful fruit of the development of the higher part of man's nature.

And the thought I wish to leave with you, as scholars and men who can command the best culture, is that it is all needed to shape and control the strong growth of material development here, to guide the blind instincts of the mass of men who are struggling for a freer place and a breath of fresh air; that you cannot stand aloof in a class isolation; that your power is in a personal sympathy with the humanity which is ignorant but discontented; and that the question which the man with the spade asks about the use of your culture to him is a menace.

(1872.)



MODERN FICTION



## MODERN FICTION

ONE of the worst characteristics of modern fiction is its so-called truth to nature. For fiction is an art, as painting is, as sculpture is, as acting is. A photograph of a natural object is not art; nor is the plaster cast of a man's face, nor is the bare setting on the stage of an actual occurrence. Art requires an idealization of nature. The amateur, though she may be a lady, who attempts to represent upon the stage the lady of the drawing-room, usually fails to convey to the spectators the impression of a lady. She lacks the art by which the trained actress, who may not be a lady, succeeds. The actual transfer to the stage of the drawing-room and its occupants, with the behavior common in well-bred society, would no doubt fail of the intended dramatic effect, and the spectators would declare the representation unnatural.

However our jargon of criticism may confound terms, we do not need to be reminded

that art and nature are distinct; that art, though dependent on nature, is a separate creation; that art is selection and idealization, with a view to impressing the mind with human, or even higher than human, sentiments and ideas. We may not agree whether the perfect man and woman ever existed, but we do know that the highest representations of them in form—that in the old Greek sculptures—were the result of artistic selection of parts of many living figures.

When we praise our recent fiction for its photographic fidelity to nature we condemn it, for we deny to it the art which would give it value. We forget that the creation of the novel should be, to a certain extent, a synthetic process, and impart to human actions that ideal quality which we demand in painting. Heine regards Cervantes as the originator of the modern novel. The older novels sprang from the poetry of the Middle Ages; their themes were knightly adventure, their personages were the nobility; the common people did not figure in them. These romances, which had degenerated into absurdities, Cervantes overthrew by *Don Quixote*. But in putting an end to the old romances he created a new school of fiction, called the modern



novel, by introducing into his romance of pseudo-knighthood a faithful description of the lower classes, and intermingling the phases of popular life. But he had no one-sided tendency to portray the vulgar only; he brought together the higher and the lower in society, to serve as light and shade, and the aristocratic element was as prominent as the popular. This noble and chivalrous element disappears in the novels of the English who imitated Cervantes. "These English novelists since Richardson's reign," says Heine, "are prosaic natures; to the prudish spirit of their time even pithy descriptions of the life of the common people are repugnant, and we see on yonder side of the Channel those *bourgeoisie* novels arise, wherein the petty humdrum life of the middle classes is depicted." But Scott appeared, and effected a restoration of the balance in fiction. As Cervantes had introduced the democratic element into romances, so Scott replaced the aristocratic element, when it had disappeared, and only a prosaic, *bourgeoisie* fiction existed. He restored to romances the symmetry which we admire in *Don Quixote*. The characteristic feature of Scott's historical romances, in the opinion of the great German critic, is the harmony be-

tween the aristocratic and democratic elements.

This is true, but is it the last analysis of the subject? Is it a sufficient account of the genius of Cervantes and Scott that they combined in their romances a representation of the higher and lower classes? Is it not of more importance how they represented them? It is only a part of the achievement of Cervantes that he introduced the common people into fiction; it is his higher glory that he idealized this material; and it is Scott's distinction also that he elevated into artistic creations both nobility and commonalty. In short, the essential of fiction is not diversity of social life, but artistic treatment of whatever is depicted. The novel may deal wholly with an aristocracy, or wholly with another class, but it must idealize the nature it touches into art. The fault of the *bourgeoisie* novels, of which Heine complains, is not that they treated of one class only, and excluded a higher social range, but that they treated it without art and without ideality. In nature there is nothing vulgar to the poet, and in human life there is nothing uninteresting to the artist; but nature and human life, for the purposes of fiction, need a creative genius.

The importation into the novel of the vulgar, sordid, and ignoble in life is always unbearable, unless genius first fuses the raw material in its alembic.

When, therefore, we say that one of the worst characteristics of modern fiction is its so-called truth to nature, we mean that it disregards the higher laws of art, and attempts to give us unidealized pictures of life. The failure is not that vulgar themes are treated, but that the treatment is vulgar; not that common life is treated, but that the treatment is common; not that care is taken with details, but that no selection is made, and everything is photographed regardless of its artistic value. I am sure that no one ever felt any repugnance on being introduced by Cervantes to the muleteers, contrabandistas, servants and serving-maids, and idle vagabonds of Spain, any more than to an acquaintance with the beggar-boys and street gamins on the canvases of Murillo. And I believe that the philosophic reason of the disgust of Heine and of every critic with the English *bourgeoisie* novels, describing the petty, humdrum life of the middle classes, was simply the want of art in the writers; the failure on their part to see that a literal transcript of nature is poor stuff

in literature. We do not need to go back to Richardson's time for illustrations of that truth. Every week the English press—which is even a greater sinner in this respect than the American—turns out a score of novels which are mediocre, not from their subjects, but from their utter lack of the artistic quality. It matters not whether they treat of middle-class life, of low, slum life, or of drawing-room life and lords and ladies; they are equally flat and dreary. Perhaps the most inane thing ever put forth in the name of literature is the so-called domestic novel, an indigestible, culinary sort of product, that might be named the doughnut of fiction. The usual apology for it is that it depicts family life with fidelity. Its characters are supposed to act and talk as people act and talk at home and in society. I trust this is a libel, but, for the sake of the argument, suppose they do. Was ever produced so insipid a result? They are called moral; in the higher sense they are immoral, for they tend to lower the moral tone and stamina of every reader. It needs genius to import into literature ordinary conversation, petty domestic details, and the commonplace and vulgar phases of life. A report of ordinary talk, which appears as dialogue in

domestic novels, may be true to nature ; if it is, it is not worth writing or worth reading. I cannot see that it serves any good purpose whatever. Fortunately, we have in our day illustrations of a different treatment of the vulgar. I do not know any more truly realistic pictures of certain aspects of New England life than are to be found in Judd's *Margaret*, wherein are depicted exceedingly pinched and ignoble social conditions. Yet the characters and the life are drawn with the artistic purity of Flaxman's illustrations of Homer. Another example is Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Every character in it is of the lower class in England. But what an exquisite creation it is ! You have to turn back to Shakespeare for any talk of peasants and clowns and shepherds to compare with the conversations in this novel, so raucous are they of the soil, and yet so touched with the finest art, the enduring art. Here is not the realism of the photograph, but of the artist ; that is to say, it is nature idealized.

When we criticise our recent fiction, it is obvious that we ought to remember that it only conforms to the tendencies of our social life, our prevailing ethics, and to the art conditions of our time. Literature is never in

any age an isolated product. It is closely related to the development or retrogression of the time in all departments of life. The literary production of our day seems, and no doubt is, more various than that of any other, and it is not easy to fix upon its leading tendency. It is claimed for its fiction, however, that it is analytic and realistic, and that much of it has certain other qualities that make it a new school in art. These aspects of it I wish to consider in this paper.

It is scarcely possible to touch upon our recent fiction, any more than upon our recent poetry, without taking into account what is called the *Æsthetic movement*—a movement more prominent in England than elsewhere. A slight contemplation of this reveals its resemblance to the Romantic movement in Germany, of which the brothers Schlegel were apostles, in the latter part of the last century. The movements are alike in this: that they both sought inspiration in mediævalism, in feudalism, in the symbols of a Christianity that ran to mysticism, in the quaint, strictly pre-Raphael art which was supposed to be the result of a simple faith. In the one case, the artless and childlike remains of old German pictures and statuary were exhumed and set

up as worthy of imitation ; in the other, we have carried out in art, in costume, and in domestic life, so far as possible, what has been wittily and accurately described as "stained-glass attitudes." With all its peculiar vagaries, the English school is essentially a copy of the German, in its return to mediævalism. The two movements have a further likeness, in that they are found accompanied by a highly symbolized religious revival. English æstheticism would probably disown any religious intention, although it has been accused of a refined interest in Pan and Venus ; but in all its feudal sympathies it goes along with the religious art and vestment revival, the return to symbolic ceremonies, monastic vigils, and sisterhoods. Years ago, an acute writer in the *Catholic World* claimed Dante Gabriel Rossetti as a Catholic writer, from the internal evidence of his poems. The German Romanticism, which was fostered by the Romish priesthood, ended, or its disciples ended, in the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. It will be interesting to note in what ritualistic harbor the æstheticism of our day will finally moor. That two similar revivals should come so near together in time makes us feel that the world moves onward—if it does move onward—in cir-

cular figures of very short radii. There seems to be only one thing certain in our Christian era, and that is a periodic return to classic models; the only stable standards of resort seem to be Greek art and literature.

The characteristics which are prominent, when we think of our recent fiction, are a wholly unidealized view of human society, which has got the name of realism; a delight in representing the worst phases of social life; an extreme analysis of persons and motives; the sacrifice of action to psychological study; the substitution of studies of character for anything like a story; a notion that it is not artistic, and that it is untrue to nature to bring any novel to a definite consummation, and especially to end it happily; and a despondent tone about society, politics, and the whole drift of modern life. Judged by our fiction, we are in an irredeemably bad way. There is little beauty, joy, or light-heartedness in living; the spontaneity and charm of life are analyzed out of existence; sweet girls, made to love and be loved, are extinct; melancholy Jaques never meets a Rosalind in the forest of Arden, and if he sees her in the drawing-room he poisons his pleasure with the thought that she is scheming and artificial; there are no



happy marriages—indeed, marriage itself is almost too inartistic to be permitted by our novelists, unless it can be supplemented by a divorce, and art is supposed to deny any happy consummation of true love. In short, modern society is going to the dogs, notwithstanding money is only three and a half per cent. It is a gloomy business life, at the best. Two learned but despondent university professors met, not long ago, at an afternoon “coffee,” and drew sympathetically together in a corner. “What a world this would be,” said one, “without coffee!” “Yes,” replied the other, stirring the fragrant cup in a dejected aspect—“yes; but what a hell of a world it is with coffee!”

The analytic method in fiction is interesting, when used by a master of dissection, but it has this fatal defect in a novel—it destroys illusion. We want to think that the characters in a story are real persons. We cannot do this if we see the author set them up as if they were marionettes, and take them to pieces every few pages, and show their interior structure, and the machinery by which they are moved. Not only is the illusion gone, but the movement of the story, if there is a story, is retarded, till the reader loses all enjoyment

in impatience and weariness. You find yourself saying, perhaps, What a very clever fellow the author is! What an ingenious creation this character is! How brightly the author makes his people talk! This is high praise, but by no means the highest, and when we reflect we see how immeasurably inferior, in fiction, the analytic method is to the dramatic. In the dramatic method the characters appear, and show what they are by what they do and say; the reader studies their motives, and a part of his enjoyment is in analyzing them, and his vanity is flattered by the trust reposed in his perspicacity. We realize how unnecessary minute analysis of character and long descriptions are in reading a drama by Shakespeare, in which the characters are so vividly presented to us in action and speech, without the least interference of the author in description, that we regard them as persons with whom we might have real relations, and not as bundles of traits and qualities. True, the conditions of dramatic art and the art of the novel are different, in that the drama can dispense with delineations, for its characters are intended to be presented to the eye; but all the same, a good drama will explain itself without the aid of actors, and there is no

doubt that it is the higher art in the novel, when once the characters are introduced, to treat them dramatically, and let them work out their own destiny according to their characters. It is a truism to say that when the reader perceives that the author can compel his characters to do what he pleases all interest in them as real persons is gone. In a novel of mere action and adventure, a lower order of fiction, where all the interest centres in the unravelling of a plot, of course this does not so much matter.

Not long ago, in Edinburgh, I amused myself in looking up some of the localities made famous in Scott's romances, which are as real in the mind as any historical places. Afterwards I read *The Heart of Midlothian*. I was surprised to find that, as a work of art, it was inferior to my recollection of it. Its style is open to the charge of prolixity, and even of slovenliness in some parts; and it does not move on with increasing momentum and concentration to a climax, as many of Scott's novels do; the story drags along in the disposition of one character after another. Yet, when I had finished the book and put it away, a singular thing happened. It suddenly came to me that in reading it I had not once

thought of Scott as the maker; it had never occurred to me that he had *created* the people in whose fortunes I had been so intensely absorbed; and I never once had felt how clever the novelist was in the naturally dramatic dialogues of the characters. In short, it had not entered my mind to doubt the existence of Jeanie and Effie Deans, and their father, and Reuben Butler, and the others, who seem as real as historical persons in Scotch history. And when I came to think of it afterwards, reflecting upon the assumptions of the modern realistic school, I found that some scenes, notably the night attack on the old Tolbooth, were as real to me as if I had read them in a police report of a newspaper of the day. Was Scott, then, only a reporter? Far from it, as you would speedily see if he had thrown into the novel a police report of the occurrences at the Tolbooth before art had shorn it of its irrelevancies, magnified its effective and salient points, given events their proper perspective, and the whole picture due light and shade.

The sacrifice of action to some extent to psychological evolution in modern fiction may be an advance in the art as an intellectual entertainment, if the writer does not make that evolution his end, and does not forget that the

indispensable thing in a novel is the story. The novel of mere adventure or mere plot, it need not be urged, is of a lower order than that in which the evolution of characters and their interaction make the story. The highest fiction is that which embodies both; that is, the story in which action is the result of mental and spiritual forces in play. And we protest against the notion that the novel of the future is to be, or should be, merely a study of, or an essay or a series of analytic essays on, certain phases of social life.

It is not true that civilization or cultivation has bred out of the world the liking for a story. In this the most highly educated Londoner and the Egyptian fellah meet on common human ground. The passion for a story has no more died out than curiosity, or than the passion of love. The truth is not that stories are not demanded, but that the born *raconteur* and story-teller is a rare person. The faculty of telling a story is a much rarer gift than the ability to analyze character, and even than the ability truly to draw character. It may be a higher or a lower power, but it is rarer. It is a natural gift, and it seems that no amount of culture can attain it, any more than learning can make a poet. Nor is the complaint well

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founded that the stories have all been told, the possible plots all been used, and the combinations of circumstances exhausted. It is no doubt our individual experience that we hear almost every day—and we hear nothing so eagerly—some new story, better or worse, but new in its exhibition of human character, and in the combination of events. And the strange, eventful histories of human life will no more be exhausted than the possible arrangements of mathematical numbers. We might as well say that there are no more good pictures to be painted as that there are no more good stories to be told.

Equally baseless is the assumption that it is inartistic and untrue to nature to bring a novel to a definite consummation, and especially to end it happily. Life, we are told, is full of incompleteness, of broken destinies, of failures, of romances that begin but do not end, of ambitions and purposes frustrated, of love crossed, of unhappy issues, or a resultless play of influences. Well, but life is full, also, of endings, of the results in concrete action of character, of completed dramas. And we expect and give, in the stories we hear and tell in ordinary intercourse, some point, some outcome, an end of some sort. If you interest me in the prepara-

tions of two persons who are starting on a journey, and expend all your ingenuity in describing their outfit and their characters, and do not tell me where they went or what befell them afterwards, I do not call that a story. Nor am I any better satisfied when you describe two persons whom you know, whose characters are interesting, and who become involved in all manner of entanglements, and then stop your narration; and when I ask, say you have not the least idea whether they got out of their difficulties, or what became of them. In real life we do not call that a story where everything is left unconcluded and in the air. In point of fact, romances are daily beginning and daily ending, well or otherwise, under our observation.

Should they always end well in the novel? I am very far from saying that. Tragedy and the pathos of failure have their places in literature as well as in life. I only say that, artistically, a good ending is as proper as a bad ending. Yet the main object of the novel is to entertain, and the best entertainment is that which lifts the imagination and quickens the spirit; to lighten the burdens of life by taking us for a time out of our humdrum and perhaps sordid conditions, so that we can see familiar

life somewhat idealized, and probably see it all the more truly from an artistic point of view. For the majority of the race, in its hard lines, fiction is an inestimable boon. Incidentally the novel may teach, encourage, refine, elevate. Even for these purposes, that novel is the best which shows us the best possibilities of our lives—the novel which gives hope and cheer instead of discouragement and gloom. Familiarity with vice and sordidness in fiction is a low entertainment, and of doubtful moral value, and their introduction is unbearable if it is not done with the idealizing touch of the artist.

Do not misunderstand me to mean that common and low life are not fit subjects of fiction, or that vice is not to be lashed by the satirist, or that the evils of a social state are never to be exposed in the novel. For this, also, is an office of the novel, as it is of the drama, to hold the mirror up to nature, and to human nature as it exhibits itself. But when the mirror shows nothing but vice and social disorder, leaving out the saving qualities that keep society on the whole, and family life as a rule, as sweet and good as they are, the mirror is not held up to nature, but more likely reflects a morbid mind. Still it must be added that the study of unfortunate social conditions is a legit-



imate one for the author to make; and that we may be in no state to judge justly of his exposure while the punishment is being inflicted, or while the irritation is fresh. For, no doubt, the reader winces often because the novel reveals to himself certain possible baseness, selfishness, and meanness. Of this, however, I (speaking for myself) may be sure: that the artist who so represents vulgar life that I am more in love with my kind, the satirist who so depicts vice and villany that I am strengthened in my moral fibre, has vindicated his choice of material. On the contrary, those novelists are not justified whose forte it seems to be to set forth goodness as to make it unattractive.

But we come back to the general proposition that the indispensable condition of the novel is that it shall entertain. And for this purpose the world is not ashamed to own that it wants, and always will want, a story—a story that has an ending; and if not a good ending, then one that in noble tragedy lifts up our nature into a high plane of sacrifice and pathos. In proof of this we have only to refer to the masterpieces of fiction which the world cherishes and loves to recur to.

I confess that I am harassed with the incom-

plete romances, that leave me, when the book is closed, as one might be on a waste plain at midnight, abandoned by his conductor, and without a lantern. I am tired of accompanying people for hours through disaster and perplexity and misunderstanding, only to see them lost in a thick mist at last. I am weary of going to funerals, which are not my funerals, however chatty and amusing the undertaker may be. I confess that I should like to see again the lovely heroine, the sweet woman, capable of a great passion and a great sacrifice; and I do not object if the novelist tries her to the verge of endurance, in agonies of mind and in perils, subjecting her to wasting sicknesses even, if he only brings her out at the end in a blissful compensation of her troubles, and endowed with a new and sweeter charm. No doubt it is better for us all, and better art, that in the novel of society the destiny should be decided by character. What an artistic and righteous consummation it is when we meet the shrewd and wicked old Baroness Bernstein at Continental gaming-tables, and feel that there was no other logical end for the worldly and fascinating Beatrix of Henry Esmond! It is one of the great privileges of fiction to right the wrongs of life, to do justice to the deserv-

ing and the vicious. It is wholesome for us to contemplate the justice, even if we do not often see it in society. It is true that hypocrisy and vulgar self-seeking often succeed in life, occupying high places, and make their exit in the pageantry of honored obsequies. Yet always the man is conscious of the hollowness of his triumph, and the world takes a pretty accurate measure of it. It is the privilege of the novelist, without introducing into such a career what is called disaster, to satisfy our innate love of justice by letting us see the true nature of such prosperity. The unscrupulous man amasses wealth, lives in luxury and splendor, and dies in the odor of respectability. His poor and honest neighbor, whom he has wronged and defrauded, lives in misery, and dies in disappointment and penury. The novelist cannot reverse the facts without such a shock to our experience as shall destroy for us the artistic value of his fiction, and bring upon his work the deserved reproach of indiscriminately "rewarding the good and punishing the bad." But we have a right to ask that he shall reveal the real heart and character of this passing show of life; for not to do this, to content himself merely with exterior appearances, is for the majority of his readers to

efface the lines between virtue and vice. And we ask this not for the sake of the moral lesson, but because not to do it is, to our deep consciousness, inartistic and untrue to our judgment of life as it goes on. Thackeray used to say that all his talent was in his eyes; meaning that he was only an observer and reporter of what he saw, and not a Providence to rectify human affairs. The great artist undervalued his genius. He reported what he saw as Raphael and Murillo reported what they saw. With his touch of genius he assigned to everything its true value, moving us to tenderness, to pity, to scorn, to righteous indignation, to sympathy with humanity. I find in him the highest art, and not that indifference to the great facts and deep currents and destinies of human life, that want of enthusiasm and sympathy, which has got the name of "art for art's sake." Literary fiction is a barren product if it wants sympathy and love for men. "Art for art's sake" is a good and defensible phrase, if our definition of art includes the ideal, and not otherwise.

I do not know how it has come about that in so large a proportion of recent fiction it is held to be artistic to look almost altogether upon the shady and the seamy side of life, giving to

this view the name of "realism"; to select the disagreeable, the vicious, the unwholesome; to give us for our companions, in our hours of leisure and relaxation, only the silly and the weak-minded woman, the fast and slangy girl, the *intrigante* and the "shady"—to borrow the language of the society she seeks—the hero of irresolution, the prig, the vulgar, and the vicious; to serve us only with the foibles of the fashionable, the low tone of the gay, the gilded ruffraff of our social state; to drag us forever along the dizzy, half-fractured precipice of the seventh commandment; to bring us into relations only with the sordid and the common; to force us to sup with unwholesome company on misery and sensuousness, in tales so utterly unpleasant that we are ready to welcome any disaster as a relief; and then—the latest and finest touch of modern art—to leave the whole weltering mass in a chaos, without conclusion and without possible issue.

And this is called a picture of real life! Heavens! Is it true that in England, where a great proportion of the fiction we describe and loathe is produced; is it true that in our New England society there is nothing but frivolity, sordidness, decay of purity and faith, ignoble

ambition and ignoble living? Is there no charm in social life—no self-sacrifice, devotion, courage to stem materialistic conditions, and live above them? Are there no noble women, sensible, beautiful, winning, with the grace that all the world loves, albeit with the feminine weaknesses that make all the world hope? Is there no manliness left? Are there no homes where the tempter does not live with the tempted in a mush of sentimental affinity? Or is it, in fact, more artistic to ignore all these, and paint only the feeble and the repulsive in our social state? The feeble, the sordid, and the repulsive in our social state nobody denies, nor does anybody deny the exceeding cleverness with which our social disorders are reproduced in fiction by a few masters of their art; but is it not time that it should be considered good art to show something of the clean and bright side?

This is pre-eminently the age of the novel. The development of variety of fiction since the days of Scott and Cooper is prodigious. The prejudice against novel-reading is quite broken down, since fiction has taken all fields for its province; everybody reads novels. Three-quarters of the books taken from the circulating library are stories; they make up

half the library of the Sunday-schools. If a writer has anything to say, or thinks he has, he knows that he can most certainly reach the ear of the public by the medium of a story. So we have novels for children; novels religious, scientific, historical, archæological, psychological, pathological, total-abstinence; novels of travel, of adventure and exploration; novels domestic, and the perpetual spawn of books called novels of society. Not only is everything turned into a story, real or so called, but there must be a story in everything. The stump-speaker holds his audience by well-worn stories; the preacher wakes up his congregation by a graphic narrative; and the Sunday-school teacher leads his children into all goodness by the entertaining path of romance; we even had a President who governed the country nearly by anecdotes.

The result of this universal demand for fiction is necessarily an enormous supply, and as everybody writes, without reference to gifts, the product is mainly trash, and trash of a deleterious sort; for bad art in literature is bad morals. I am not sure but the so-called domestic, the diluted, the "goody," namby-pamby, unrobust stories, which are so largely read by school-girls, young ladies, and women,

do more harm than the "knowing," audacious, wicked ones, also, it is reported, read by them, and written largely by their own sex. For minds enfeebled and relaxed by stories lacking even intellectual fibre are in a poor condition to meet the perils of life. This is not the place for discussing the stories written for the young and for the Sunday-school. It seems impossible to check the flow of them, now that so much capital is invested in this industry ; but I think that healthy public sentiment is beginning to recognize the truth that the excessive reading of this class of literature by the young is weakening to the mind, besides being a serious hinderance to study and to attention to the literature that has substance.

In his account of the Romantic School in Germany, Heine says, "In the breast of a nation's authors there always lies the image of its future, and the critic who, with a knife of sufficient keenness, dissects a new poet can easily prophesy, as from the entrails of a sacrificial animal, what shape matters will assume in Germany." Now if all the poets and novelists of England and America to-day were cut up into little pieces (and we might sacrifice a few for the sake of the experiment),



there is no inspecting augur who could divine therefrom our literary future. The diverse indications would puzzle the most acute dissector. Lost in the variety, the multiplicity of minute details, the refinements of analysis and introspection, he would miss any leading indications. For with all its variety, it seems to me that one characteristic of recent fiction is its narrowness—narrowness of vision and of treatment. It deals with lives rather than with life. Lacking ideality, it fails of broad perception. We are accustomed to think that with the advent of the genuine novel of society, in the first part of this century, a great step forward was taken in fiction. And so there was. If the artist did not use a big canvas, he adopted a broad treatment. But the tendency now is to push analysis of individual peculiarities to an extreme, and to substitute a study of traits for a representation of human life.

It scarcely need be said that it is not multitude of figures on a literary canvas that secures breadth of treatment. The novel may be narrow, though it swarms with a hundred personages. It may be as wide as life, as high as imagination can lift itself; it may image to us a whole social state, though it

puts in motion no more persons than we made the acquaintance of in one of the romances of Hawthorne. Consider for a moment how Thackeray produced his marvellous results. We follow with him, in one of his novels of society, the fortunes of a very few people. They are so vividly portrayed that we are convinced the author must have known them in that great world with which he was so familiar; we should not be surprised to meet any of them in the streets of London. When we visit the Charterhouse School, and see the old forms where the boys sat nearly a century ago, we have in our minds Colonel Newcome as really as we have Charles Lamb and Coleridge and De Quincey. We are absorbed, as we read, in the evolution of the characters of perhaps only half a dozen people; and yet all the world, all great, roaring, struggling London, is in the story, and Clive, and Philip, and Ethel, and Becky Sharpe, and Captain Costigan are a part of life. It is the flowery month of May; the scent of the hawthorn is in the air, and the tender flush of the new spring suffuses the Park, where the tide of fashion and pleasure and idleness surges up and down — the sauntering throng, the splendid equipages, the endless cavalcade in Rotten Row, in

which Clive descries afar off the white plume of his lady-love dancing on the waves of an unattainable society; the club windows are all occupied; Parliament is in session, with its nightly echoes of imperial politics; the thronged streets roar with life from morn till nearly morn again; the drawing-rooms hum and sparkle in the crush of a London season; as you walk the midnight pavement, through the swinging doors of the cider-cellars comes the burst of bacchanalian song. Here is the world of the press and of letters; here are institutions, an army, a navy, commerce, glimpses of great ships going to and fro on distant seas, of India, of Australia. This one book is an epitome of English life, almost of the empire itself. We are conscious of all this, so much breadth and atmosphere has the artist given his little history of half a dozen people in this struggling world.

But this background of a great city, of an empire, is not essential to the breadth of treatment upon which we insist in fiction, to broad characterization, to the play of imagination about common things which transfigures them into the immortal beauty of artistic creations. What a simple idyl in itself is Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*! It is the creation of a

few master-touches, using only common material. Yet it has in it the breadth of life itself, the depth and passion of all our human struggle in the world—a little story with a vast horizon.

It is constantly said that the conditions in America are unfavorable to the higher fiction; that our society is unformed, without centre, without the definition of classes, which give the light and shade that Heine speaks of in *Don Quixote*; that it lacks types and customs that can be widely recognized and accepted as national and characteristic; that we have no past; that we want both romantic and historic background; that we are in a shifting, flowing, forming period which fiction cannot seize on; that we are in diversity and confusion that baffle artistic treatment; in short, that American life is too vast, varied, and crude for the purpose of the novelist.

These excuses might be accepted as fully accounting for our failure—or shall we say our delay?—if it were not for two or three of our literary performances. It is true that no novel has been written, and we dare say no novel will be written, that is, or will be, an epitome of the manifold diversities of Ameri-

can life, unless it be in the form of one of Walt Whitman's catalogues. But we are not without peculiar types; not without characters, not without incidents, stories, heroisms, inequalities; not without the charms of nature in infinite variety; and human nature is the same here that it is in Spain, France, and England. Out of these materials Cooper wrote romances, narratives stamped with the distinct characteristics of American life and scenery, that were and are eagerly read by all civilized peoples, and which secured the universal verdict which only breadth of treatment commands. Out of these materials, also, Hawthorne, child endowed with a creative imagination, wove those tragedies of interior life, those novels of our provincial New England, which rank among the great masterpieces of the novelist's art. The master artist can idealize even our crude material, and make it serve.

These exceptions to a rule do not go to prove the general assertion of a poverty of material for fiction here; the simple truth probably is that, for reasons incident to the development of a new region of the earth, creative genius has been turned in other directions than that of fictitious literature. Nor

do I think that we need to take shelter behind the well-worn and convenient observation, the truth of which stands in much doubt, that literature is the final flower of a nation's civilization.

However, this is somewhat a digression. We are speaking of the tendency of recent fiction, very much the same everywhere that novels are written, which we have imperfectly sketched. It is probably of no more use to protest against it than it is to protest against the vulgar realism in pictorial art, which holds ugliness and beauty in equal esteem; or against æstheticism gone to seed in languid affectations; or against the enthusiasm of a social life which wrecks its religion on the color of a vestment, or sighs out its divine soul over an ancient pewter mug. Most of our fiction, in its extreme analysis, introspection and self-consciousness, in its devotion to details, in its disregard of the ideal, in its selection as well as in its treatment of nature, is simply of a piece with a good deal else that passes for genuine art. Much of it is admirable in workmanship, and exhibits a cleverness in details and a subtlety in the observation of traits which many great novels lack. But I should be sorry to think that the historian will judge

our social life by it, and I doubt not that most of us are ready for a more ideal, that is to say, a more artistic, view of our performances in this bright and pathetic world.

(1883.)





THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY  
MR. FROUDE'S "PROGRESS"



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To revisit this earth, some ages after their departure from it, is a common wish among men. We frequently hear men say that they would give so many months or years of their lives in exchange for a less number on the globe one or two or three centuries from now. Merely to see the world from some remote sphere, like the distant spectator of a play which passes in dumb show, would not suffice. They would like to be of the world again, and enter into its feelings, passions, hopes; to feel the sweep of its current, and so to comprehend what it has become.

I suppose that we all who are thoroughly interested in this world have this desire. There are some select souls who sit apart in calm endurance, waiting to be translated out of a world they are almost tired of patronizing, to whom the whole thing seems, doubtless, like a cheap performance. They sit on the fence of criticism, and cannot for the life of them see what

the vulgar crowd make such a toil and sweat about. The prizes are the same dreary, old, fading bay wreaths. As for the soldiers marching past, their uniforms are torn, their hats are shocking, their shoes are dusty, they do not appear (to a man sitting on the fence) to march with any kind of spirit, their flags are old and tattered, the drums they beat are barbarous; and, besides, it is not probable that they are going anywhere; they will merely come round again, the same people, like the marching chorons in the *Beggar's Opera*. Such critics, of course, would not care to see the vulgar show over again; it is enough for them to put on record their protest against it in the weekly *Judgment Days* which they edit, and by-and-by withdraw out of their private boxes, with pity for a world in the creation of which they were not consulted.

The desire to revisit this earth is, I think, based upon a belief, wellnigh universal, that the world is to make some progress, and that it will be more interesting in the future than it is now. I believe that the human mind, whenever it is developed enough to comprehend its own action, rests, and has always rested, in this expectation. I do not know any period of time in which the civilized mind has

not had expectation of something better for the race in the future. This expectation is sometimes stronger than it is at others; and, again, there are always those who say that the Golden Age is behind them. It is always behind or before us; the poor present alone has no friends; the present, in the minds of many, is only the car that is carrying us away from an age of virtue and of happiness, or that is perhaps bearing us on to a time of ease and comfort and security.

Perhaps it is worth while, in view of certain recent discussions, and especially of some free criticisms of this country, to consider whether there is any intention of progress in this world, and whether that intention is discoverable in the age in which we live. If it is an old question, it is not a settled one; the practical disbelief in any such progress is widely entertained. Not long ago Mr. James Anthony Froude published an essay on Progress, in which he examined some of the evidences upon which we rely to prove that we live in an "era of progress." It is a melancholy essay, for its tone is that of profound scepticism as to certain influences and means of progress upon which we in this country most rely. With the illustrative arguments of Mr. Froude's

essay I do not purpose specially to meddle; I recall it to the attention of the reader as a representative type of scepticism regarding progress which is somewhat common among intellectual men, and is not confined to England. It is not exactly an acceptance of Rousseau's notion that civilization is a mistake, and that it would be better for us all to return to a state of nature—though in John Ruskin's case it nearly amounts to this; but it is a hostility in its last analysis to what we understand by the education of the people, and to the government of the people by themselves. If Mr. Froude's essay is anything but an exhibition of the scholarly weapons of criticism, it is the expression of a profound disbelief in the intellectual education of the masses of the people. Mr. Ruskin goes further. He makes his open proclamation against any emancipation from hand-toil. Steam is the devil himself let loose from the pit, and all labor-saving machinery is his own invention. Mr. Ruskin is the bull that stands upon the track and threatens with annihilation the on-coming locomotive; and I think that any spectator who sees his menacing attitude and hears his roaring cannot but have fears for the locomotive.

There are two sorts of infidelity concerning

humanity, and I do not know which is the more withering in its effects. One is that which regards this world as only a waste and a desert, across the sands of which we are merely fugitives, fleeing from the wrath to come. The other is that doubt of any divine intention in development, in history, which we call progress from age to age.

In the eyes of this latter infidelity history is not a procession or a progression, but only a series of disconnected pictures, each little era rounded with its own growth, fruitage, and decay, a series of incidents or experiments, without even the string of a far-reaching purpose to connect them. There is no intention of progress in it all. The race is barbarous, and then it changes to civilized; in the one case the strong rob the weak by brute force; in the other the crafty rob the unwary by finesse. The latter is a more agreeable state of things; but it comes to about the same. The robber used to knock us down and take away our sheepskins; he now administers chloroform and relieves us of our watches. It is a gentlemanly proceeding, and scientific, and we call it civilization. Meantime human nature remains the same, and the whole thing is a weary round that has no advance in it.

If this is true the succession of men and of races is no better than a vegetable succession; and Mr. Froude is quite right in doubting if education of the brain will do the English agricultural laborer any good; and Mr. Ruskin ought to be aided in his crusade against machinery, which turns the world upside down. The best that can be done with a man is the best that can be done with a plant—set him out in some favorable locality, or leave him where he happened to strike root, and there let him grow and mature in measure and quiet—especially quiet—as he may in God's sun and rain. If he happens to be a cabbage, in Heaven's name don't try to make a rose of him, and do not disturb the vegetable maturing of his head by grafting ideas upon his stock.

The most serious difficulty in the way of those who maintain that there is an intention of progress in this world from century to century, from age to age—a discernible growth, a universal development—is the fact that all nations do not make progress at the same time or in the same ratio; that nations reach a certain development, and then fall away and even retrograde; that while one may be advancing into high civilization, another is lapsing into deeper barbarism, and that nations appear to



have a limit of growth. If there were a law of progress, an intention of it in all the world, ought not all peoples and tribes to advance *pari passu*, or at least ought there not to be discernible a general movement, historical and contemporary? There is no such general movement which can be computed, the law of which can be discovered—therefore it does not exist. In a kind of despair, we are apt to run over in our minds empires and pre-eminent civilizations that have existed, and then to doubt whether life in this world is intended to be anything more than a series of experiments. There is the German nation of our day, the most aggressive in various fields of intellectual activity, a Hercules of scholarship, the most thoroughly trained and powerful—though its civilization marches to the noise of the hateful and barbarous drum. In what points is it better than the Greek nation of the age of its superlative artists, philosophers, poets—the age of the most joyous, elastic human souls in the most perfect human bodies? Again, it is perhaps a fanciful notion that the Atlantis of Plato was the northern part of the South American continent, projecting out towards Africa, and that the Antilles are the peaks and headlands of its sunken bulk. But

there are evidences enough that the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea were within historic periods the seat of a very considerable civilization—the seat of cities, of commerce, of trade, of palaces and pleasure-gardens—faint images, perhaps, of the luxurious civilization of Baïæ and Pozzuoli and Capri in the most profligate period of the Roman empire. It is not more difficult to believe that there was a great material development here than to believe it of the African shore of the Mediterranean. Not to multiply instances that will occur to all, we see as many retrograde as advance movements, and we see, also, that while one spot of the earth at one time seems to be the chosen theatre of progress, other portions of the globe are absolutely dead and without the least leaven of advancing life, and we cannot understand how this can be if there is any such thing as an all-pervading and animating intention or law of progress. And then we are reminded that the individual human mind long ago attained its height of power and capacity. It is enough to recall the names of Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Paul, Homer, David.

No doubt it has seemed to other periods and other nations, as it now does to the

present civilized races, that they were the chosen times and peoples of an extraordinary and limitless development. It must have seemed so to the Jews who overran Palestine and set their shining cities on all the hills of heathendom. It must have seemed so to the Babylonish conquerors who swept over Palestine in turn, on their way to greater conquests in Egypt. It must have seemed so to Greece when the Acropolis was to the outlying world what the imperial calla is to the marsh in which it lifts its superb flower. It must have seemed so to Rome when its solid roads of stone ran to all parts of a tributary world — the highways of the legions, her ministers, and of the wealth that poured into her treasury. It must have seemed so to followers of Mahomet, when the crescent knew no pause in its march up the Arabian peninsula to the Bosphorus, to India, along the Mediterranean shores to Spain, where in the eighth century it flowered into a culture, a learning, a refinement in art and manners, to which the Christian world of that day was a stranger. It must have seemed so in the awakening of the sixteenth century, when Europe, Spain leading, began that great movement of discovery and aggrandizement which has, in the

end, been profitable only to a portion of the adventurers. And what shall we say of a nation as old, if not older than any of these we have mentioned, slowly building up meantime a civilization and perfecting a system of government and a social economy which should outlast them all, and remain to our day almost the sole monument of permanence and stability in a shifting world.

How many times has the face of Europe been changed — and parts of Africa, and Asia Minor too, for that matter—by conquests and crusades, and the rise and fall of civilizations as well as dynasties? while China has endured, almost undisturbed, under a system of law, administration, morality, as old as the Pyramids probably—existed a coherent nation, highly developed in certain essentials, meeting and mastering, so far as we can see, the great problem of an over-populated territory, living in a good degree of peace and social order, of respect for age and law, and making a continuous history, the mere record of which is printed in a thousand bulky volumes. Yet we speak of the Chinese empire as an instance of arrested growth, for which there is no salvation, except it shall catch the spirit of progress abroad in the world.

What is this progress, and where does it come from?

Think for a moment of this significant situation. For thousands of years, empires, systems of society, systems of civilization—Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Moslem, Feudal—have flourished and fallen, grown to a certain height and passed away; great organized fabrics have gone down, and, if there has been any progress, it has been as often defeated as renewed. And here is an empire, apart from this scene of alternate success and disaster, which has existed in a certain continuity and stability, and yet, now that it is uncovered and stands face to face with the rest of the world, it finds that it has little to teach us, and almost everything to learn from us. The old empire sends its students to learn of us, the newest child of civilization; and through us they learn all the great past, its literature, law, science, out of which we sprang. It appears, then, that progress has, after all, been with the shifting world, that has been all this time going to pieces, rather than with the world that has been permanent and unshaken.

When we speak of progress we may mean two things. We may mean a lifting of the races as a whole by reason of more power

over the material world, by reason of what we call the conquest of nature and a practical use of its forces; or we may mean a higher development of the individual man, so that he shall be better and happier. If from age to age it is discoverable that the earth is better adapted to man as a dwelling-place, and he is on the whole fitted to get more out of it for his own growth, is not that progress, and is it not evidence of an intention of progress?

Now, it is sometimes said that Providence, in the economy of this world, cares nothing for the individual, but works out its ideas and purposes through the races, and in certain periods, slowly bringing in, by great agencies and by processes destructive to individuals and to millions of helpless human beings, truths and principles; so laying stepping-stones onward to a great consummation. I do not care to dwell upon this thought, but let us see if we can find any evidence in history of the presence in this world of an intention of progress.

It is common to say that, if the world makes progress at all, it is by its great men, and when anything important for the race is to be done, a great man is raised up to do it. Yet another way to look at it is, that the

doing of something at the appointed time makes the man who does it great, or at least celebrated. The man often appears to be only a favored instrument of communication. As we glance back we recognize the truth that, at this and that period, the time had come for certain discoveries. Intelligence seemed pressing in from the invisible. Many minds were on the alert to apprehend it. We believe, for instance, that if Gutenberg had not invented movable types, somebody else would have given them to the world about that time. Ideas, at certain times, throng for admission into the world; and we are all familiar with the fact that the same important idea (never before revealed in all the ages) occurs to separate and widely distinct minds at about the same time. The invention of the electric telegraph seemed to burst upon the world simultaneously from many quarters—not perfect, perhaps, but the time for the idea had come—and happy was it for the man who entertained it. We have agreed to call Columbus the discoverer of America, but I suppose there is no doubt that America had been visited by European, and probably Asiatic, people ages before Columbus; that four or five centuries before him people from northern

Europe had settlements here; he was fortunate, however, in "discovering" it in the fulness of time, when the world, in its progress, was ready for it. If the Greeks had had gunpowder, electro-magnetism, the printing press, history would need to be rewritten. Why the inquisitive Greek mind did not find out these things is a mystery upon any other theory than the one we are considering.

And it is as mysterious that China, having gunpowder and the art of printing, is not to-day like Germany.

There seems to me to be a progress, or an intention of progress, in the world, independent of individual men. Things get on by all sorts of instruments, and sometimes by very poor ones. There are times when new thoughts or applications of known principles seem to throng from the invisible for expression through human media, and there is hardly ever an important invention set free in the world that men do not appear to be ready cordially to receive it. Often we should be justified in saying that there was a widespread expectation of it. Almost all the great inventions and the ingenious application of principles have many claimants for the honor of priority.



On any other theory than this, that there is present in the world an intention of progress which outlasts individuals, and even races, I cannot account for the fact that, while civilizations decay and pass away, and human systems go to pieces, ideas remain and accumulate. We, the latest age, are the inheritors of all the foregoing ages. I do not believe that anything of importance has been lost to the world. The Jewish civilization was torn up root and branch, but whatever was valuable in the Jewish polity is ours now. We may say the same of the civilizations of Athens and of Rome; though the entire organization of the ancient world, to use Mr. Froude's figure, collapsed into a heap of incoherent sand, the ideas remained, and Greek art and Roman law are part of the world's solid possessions.

Even those who question the value to the individual of what we call progress, admit, I suppose, the increase of knowledge in the world from age to age, and not only its increase, but its diffusion. The intelligent school-boy to-day knows more than the ancient sages knew—more about the visible heavens, more of the secrets of the earth, more of the human body. The rudiments

of his education, the common experiences of his every-day life, were, at the best, the guesses and speculations of a remote age. There is certainly an accumulation of facts, ideas, knowledge. Whether this makes men better, wiser, happier, is indeed disputed.

In order to maintain the notion of a general and intended progress, it is not necessary to show that no preceding age has excelled ours in some special development. Phidias has had no rival in sculpture, we may admit. It is possible that glass was once made as flexible as leather, and that copper could be hardened like steel. But I do not take much stock in the "lost arts," the wondering theme of the lyceums. The knowledge of the natural world, and of materials, was never, I believe, so extensive and exact as it is to-day. It is possible that there are tricks of chemistry, ingenious processes, secrets of color, of which we are ignorant; but I do not believe there was ever an ancient alchemist who could not be taught something in a modern laboratory. The vast engineering works of the ancient Egyptians, the remains of their temples and pyramids excite our wonder; but I have no doubt that President Grant, if he becomes the tyrant they say he is becoming, and commands

the labor of forty millions of slaves — a large proportion of them office - holders, — could build a Karnak, or erect a string of pyramids across New Jersey.

Mr. Froude runs lightly over a list of subjects upon which the believer in progress relies for his belief, and then says of them that the world calls this progress—he calls it only change. I suppose he means by this two things: that these great movements of our modern life are not any evidence of a permanent advance, and that our whole structure may tumble into a heap of incoherent sand, as systems of society have done before; and, again, that it is questionable if, in what we call a stride in civilization, the individual citizen is becoming any purer or more just, or if his intelligence is directed towards learning and doing what is right, or only to the means of more extended pleasures.

It is, perhaps, idle to speculate upon the first of these points—the permanence of our advance, if it is an advance. But we may be encouraged by one thing that distinguishes this period—say from the middle of the eighteenth century—from any that has preceded it. I mean the introduction of machinery, applied to the multiplication of man's

power in a hundred directions—to manufacturing, to locomotion, to the diffusion of thought and of knowledge. I need not dwell upon this familiar topic. Since this period began there has been, so far as I know, no retrograde movement anywhere, but, besides the material, an intellectual and spiritual kindling the world over, for which history has no sort of parallel. Truth is always the same, and will make its way, but this subject might be illustrated by a study of the relation of Christianity and of the brotherhood of men to machinery. The theme would demand an essay by itself. I leave it with the one remark, that this great change now being wrought in the world by the multiplicity of machinery is not more a material than it is an intellectual one, and that we have no instance in history of a catastrophe widespread enough and adequate to sweep away its results. That is to say, none of the catastrophes, not even the corruptions, which brought to ruin the ancient civilizations, would work anything like the same disaster in an age which has the use of machinery that this age has.

For instance: Gibbon selects the period between the accession of Trajan and the death of Marcus Aurelius as the time in which the human race enjoyed more general happiness

than they had ever known before, or had since known. Yet, says Mr. Froude, in the midst of this prosperity the heart of the empire was dying out of it; luxury and selfishness were eating away the principle that held society together, and the ancient world was on the point of collapsing into a heap of incoherent sand. Now, it is impossible to conceive that the catastrophe which did happen to that civilization could have happened if the world had then possessed the steam-engine, the printing-press, and the electric telegraph. The Roman power might have gone down, and the face of the world been recast; but such universal chaos and such a relapse for the individual people would seem impossible.

If we turn from these general considerations to the evidences that this is an "era of progress" in the condition of individual men, we are met by more specific denials. Granted, it is said, all your facilities for travel and communication, for cheap and easy manufacture, for the distribution of cheap literature and news, your cheap education, better homes, and all the comforts and luxuries of your machine civilization, is the average man, the agriculturist, the machinist, the laborer any better for it all? Are there more purity, more honest,

fair dealing, genuine work, fear and honor of God? Are the proceeds of labor more evenly distributed? These, it is said, are the criteria of progress; all else is misleading.

Now, it is true that the ultimate end of any system of government or civilization should be the improvement of the individual man. And yet this truth, as Mr. Froude puts it, is only a half-truth, so that this single test of any system may not do for a given time and a limited area. Other and wider considerations come in. Disturbances, which for a while unsettle society and do not bring good results to individuals, may, nevertheless, be necessary, and may be a sign of progress. Take the favorite illustration of Mr. Froude and Mr. Ruskin—the condition of the agricultural laborer of England. If I understand them, the civilization of the last century has not helped his position as a man. If I understand them, he was a better man, in a better condition of earthly happiness, and with a better chance of heaven, fifty years ago than now, before the “era of progress” found him out. (It ought to be noticed here, that the report of the Parliamentary Commission on the condition of the English agricultural laborer does not sustain Mr. Froude’s assumptions. On the contrary, the report shows that

his condition is in almost all respects vastly better than it was fifty years ago.) Mr. Ruskin would remove the steam-engine and all its devilish works from his vicinity; he would abolish factories, speedy travel by rail, new-fangled instruments of agriculture, our patent education, and remit him to his ancient condition—tied for life to a bit of ground, which should supply all his simple wants; his wife should weave the clothes for the family; his children should learn nothing but the catechism and to speak the truth; he should take his religion without question from the hearty, fox-hunting parson, and live and die undisturbed by ideas. Now, it seems to me that if Mr. Ruskin could realize in some isolated nation this idea of a pastoral, simple existence, under a paternal government, he would have in time an ignorant, stupid, brutal community in a great deal worse case than the agricultural laborers of England are at present. Three-fourths of the crime in the kingdom of Bavaria is committed in the Ultramontane region of the Tyrol, where the conditions of popular education are about those that Mr. Ruskin seems to regret as swept away by the present movement in England—a stagnant state of things, in which any wind of heaven would be

a blessing, even if it were a tornado. Education of the modern sort unsettles the peasant, renders him unfit for labor, and gives us a half-educated idler in place of a conscientious workman. The disuse of the apprentice system is not made good by the present system of education, because no one learns a trade well, and the consequence is poor work, and a sham civilization generally. There is some truth in these complaints. But the way out is not backward, but forward. The fault is not with education, though it may be with the kind of education. The education must go forward; the man must not be half but wholly educated. It is only half-knowledge, like half-training in a trade, that is dangerous.

But what I wish to say is, that notwithstanding certain unfavorable things in the condition of the English laborer and mechanic, his chance is better in the main than it was fifty years ago. The world is a better world for him. He has the opportunity to be more of a man. His world is wider, and it is all open to him to go where he will. Mr. Ruskin may not so easily find his ideal, contented peasant, but the man himself begins to apprehend that this is a world of ideas as well as of food and clothes, and I think, if he were consulted, he



would have no desire to return to the condition of his ancestors. In fact, the most hopeful symptom in the condition of the English peasant is his discontent. For, as scepticism is in one sense the handmaid of truth, discontent is the mother of progress. The man is comparatively of little use in the world who is contented.

There is another thought pertinent here. It is this: that no man, however humble, can live a full life if he lives to himself alone. He is more of a man, he lives in a higher plane of thought and of enjoyment, the more his communications are extended with his fellows and the wider his sympathies are. I count it a great thing for the English peasant, a solid addition to his life, that he is every day being put into more intimate relations with every other man on the globe.

I know it is said that these are only vague and sentimental notions of progress— notions of a "salvation by machinery." Let us pass to something that may be less vague, even if it be more sentimental. For a hundred years we have reckoned it progress, that the people were taking part in government. We have had a good deal of faith in the proposition put forth at Philadelphia a century ago, that men are, in

effect, equal in political rights. Out of this simple proposition springs logically the extension of suffrage, and a universal education, in order that this important function of a government by the people may be exercised intelligently.

Now we are told by the most accomplished English essayists that this is a mistake, that it is change, but no progress. Indeed, there are philosophers in America who think so. At least I infer so from the fact that Mr. Froude fathers one of his definitions of our condition upon an American. When a block of printer's type is by accident broken up and disintegrated, it falls into what is called "pi." The "pi," a mere chaos, is afterwards sorted and distributed, preparatory to being built up into fresh combinations. "A distinguished American friend," says Mr. Froude, "describes Democracy as making pi." It is so witty a sarcasm that I almost think Mr. Froude manufactured it himself. Well, we have been making this "pi" for a hundred years; it seems to be a national dish in considerable favor with the rest of the world—even such ancient nations as China and Japan want a piece of it.

Now, of course, no form of human government is perfect, or anything like it, but I should

be willing to submit the question to an English traveller, even whether, on the whole, the people of the United States do not have as fair a chance in life and feel as little the oppression of government as any other in the world; whether anywhere the burdens are more lifted off men's shoulders.

This infidelity to popular government and unbelief in any good results to come from it are not, unfortunately, confined to the English essayists. I am not sure but the notion is growing in what is called the intellectual class, that it is a mistake to intrust the government to the ignorant many, and that it can only be lodged safely in the hands of the wise few. We hear the corruptions of the times attributed to universal suffrage. Yet these corruptions certainly are not peculiar to the United States. It is also said here, as it is in England, that our diffused and somewhat superficial education is merely unfitting the mass of men, who must be laborers, for any useful occupation.

This argument, reduced to plain terms, is simply this: that the mass of mankind are unfit to decide properly their own political and social condition; and that for the mass of mankind any but a very limited mental de-

velopment is to be deprecated. It would be enough to say of this, that class government and popular ignorance have been tried for so many ages, and always with disaster and failure in the end, that I should think philanthropical historians would be tired of recommending them. But there is more to be said.

I feel that as a resident on earth, part owner of it for a time, unavoidably a member of society, I have a right to a voice in determining what my condition and what my chance in life shall be. I may be ignorant, I should be a very poor ruler of other people, but I am better capable of deciding some things that touch me nearly than another is. By what logic can I say that I should have a part in the conduct of this world and that my neighbor should not? Who is to decide what degree of intelligence shall fit a man for a share in the government? How are we to select the few capable men that are to rule all the rest? As a matter of fact, men have been rulers who had neither the average intelligence nor virtue of the people they governed. And, as a matter of historical experience, a class in power has always sought its own benefit rather than that of the whole people. Lunacy, extraordinary stupid-

ity, and crime aside, a man is the best guardian of his own liberty and rights.

The English critics, who say we have taken the government from the capable few and given it to the people, speak of universal suffrage as a quack panacea of this "era of progress." But it is not the manufactured panacea of any theorist or philosopher whatever. It is the natural result of a diffused knowledge of human rights and of increasing intelligence. It is nothing against it that Napoleon III. used a mockery of it to govern France. It is not a device of the closet, but a method of government, which has naturally suggested itself to men as they have grown into a feeling of self-reliance and a consciousness that they have some right in the decision of their own destiny in the world. It is true that suffrage peculiarly fits a people virtuous and intelligent. But there has not yet been invented any government in which a people would thrive who were ignorant and vicious.

Our foreign critics seem to regard our "American system," by-the-way, as a sort of invention or patent-right, upon which we are experimenting; forgetting that it is as legitimate a growth out of our circumstances as the English system is out of its antecedents. Our system

is not the product of theorists or closet philosophers; but it was ordained in substance and inevitable from the day the first "town meeting" assembled in New England, and it was not in the power of Hamilton or any one else to make it otherwise.

So you must have education, now you have the ballot, say the critics of this era of progress; and this is another of your cheap inventions. Not that we undervalue book knowledge. Oh no! but it really seems to us that a good trade, with the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments back of it, would be the best thing for most of you. You must work for a living anyway; and why, now, should you unsettle your minds?

This is such an astounding view of human life and destiny that I do not know what to say to it. Did it occur to Mr. Froude to ask the man whether he would be contented with a good trade and the Ten Commandments? Perhaps the man would like eleven commandments? And, if he gets hold of the eleventh, he may want to know something more about his fellow-men, a little geography maybe, and some of Mr. Froude's history, and thus he may be led off into literature, and the Lord knows where.

The inference is that education — book

fashion—will unfit the man for useful work. Mr. Froude here again stops at a half-truth. As a general thing, intelligence is useful in any position a man occupies. But it is true that there is a superficial and misdirected sort of education, so called, which makes the man who receives it despise labor; and it is also true that in the present educational revival there has been a neglect of training in the direction of skilled labor, and we all suffer more or less from cheap and dishonest work. But the way out of this, again, is forward, and not backward. It is a good sign, and not a stigma upon this era of progress, that people desire education. But this education must be of the whole man; he must be taught to work as well as to read, and he is, indeed, poorly educated if he is not fitted to do his work in the world. We certainly shall not have better workmen by having ignorant workmen. I need not say that the real education is that which will best fit a man for performing well his duties in life. If Mr. Froude, instead of his plaint over the scarcity of good mechanics, and of the Ten Commandments in England, had recommended the establishment of industrial schools, he would have spoken more to the purpose.

I should say that the fashionable scepticism of to-day, here and in England, is in regard to universal suffrage and the capacity of the people to govern themselves. The whole system is the sharp invention of Thomas Jefferson and others, by which crafty demagogues can rule. Instead of being, as we have patriotically supposed, a real progress in human development, it is only a fetich, which is becoming rapidly a failure. Now, there is a great deal of truth in the assertion that, whatever the form of government, the ablest men, or the strongest, or the most cunning in the nation, will rule. And yet it is true that in a popular government, like this, the humblest citizen, if he is wronged or oppressed, has in his hands a readier instrument of redress than he has ever had in any form of government. And it must not be forgotten that the ballot in the hands of all is perhaps the only safeguard against the tyranny of wealth in the hands of the few. It is true that bad men can band together and be destructive; but so they can in any government. Revolution by ballot is much safer than revolution by violence; and, granting that human nature is selfish, when the whole people are the government selfishness is on the side of the government. Can you mention any class



in this country whose interest it is to overturn the government? And, then, as to the wisdom of the popular decisions by the ballot in this country. Look carefully at all the Presidential elections from Washington's down, and say, in the light of history, if the popular decision has not, every time, been the best for the country. It may not have seemed so to some of us at the time, but I think it is true, and a very significant fact.

Of course, in this affirmation of belief that one hundred years of popular government in this country is a real progress for humanity, and not merely a change from the rule of the fit to the rule of the cunning, we cannot forget that men are pretty much everywhere the same, and that we have abundant reason for national humility. We are pretty well aware that ours is not an ideal state of society, and should be so, even if the English who pass by did not revile us, wagging their heads. We might differ with them about the causes of our disorders. Doubtless, extended suffrage has produced certain results. It seems, strangely enough, to have escaped the observation of our English friends that to suffrage was due the late horse disease. No one can discover any other cause for it. But there is a cause

for the various phenomena of this period of shoddy, of inflated speculation, of disturbance of all values, social, moral, political, and material, quite sufficient in the light of history to account for them. It is not suffrage; it is an irredeemable paper currency. It has borne its usual fruit with us, and neither foreign nor home critics can shift the responsibility of it upon our system of government. Yes, it is true, we have contrived to fill the world with our scandals of late. I might refer to a loose commercial and political morality; to betrayals of popular trust in politics; to corruptions in legislatures and in corporations; to an abuse of power in the public press, which has hardly yet got itself adjusted to its sudden accession of enormous influence. We complain of its injustice to individuals sometimes. We might imagine that something like this would occur.

A newspaper one day says: "We are exceedingly pained to hear that the Hon. Mr. Blank, who is running for Congress in the First District, has permitted his aged grandmother to go to the town poor-house. What renders this conduct inexplicable is the fact that Mr. Blank is a man of large fortune."

The next day the newspaper says: "The Hon. Mr. Blank has not seen fit to deny the

damaging accusation in regard to the treatment of his grandmother."

The next day the newspaper says: "Mr. Blank is still silent. He is probably aware that he cannot afford to rest under this grave charge."

The next day the newspaper asks: "Where's Blank? Has he fled?"

At last, goaded by these remarks, and most unfortunately for himself, Mr. Blank writes to the newspaper and most indignantly denies the charge; he never sent his grandmother to the poor-house.

Thereupon the newspaper says, "Of course, a rich man who would put his own grandmother in the poor-house would deny it. Our informant was a gentleman of character. Mr. Blank rests the matter on his unsupported word. It is a question of veracity."

Or, perhaps, Mr. Blank, more unfortunately for himself, begins by making an affidavit, wherein he swears that he never sent his grandmother to the poor-house, and that, in point of fact, he has not any grandmother whatever.

The newspaper then, in language that is now classical, "goes for" Mr. Blank. It says, "Mr. Blank resorts to the common device of

the rogue—the affidavit. If he had been conscious of rectitude, would he not have relied upon his simple denial?"

Now, if an extreme case like this could occur, it would be bad enough. But, in our free society, the remedy would be at hand. The constituents of Mr. Blank would elect him in triumph. The newspaper would lose public confidence and support and learn to use its position more justly. What I mean to indicate by such an extreme instance as this is, that in our very license of individual freedom there is finally a correcting power.

We might pursue this general subject of progress by a comparison of the society of this country now with that fifty years ago. I have no doubt that in every essential this is better than that, in manners, in morality, in charity and toleration, in education and religion. I know the standard of morality is higher. I know the churches are purer. Not fifty years ago, in a New England town, a distinguished doctor of divinity, the pastor of a leading church, was part owner in a distillery. He was a great light in his denomination, but he was an extravagant liver, and, being unable to pay his debts, he was arrested and put into jail, with the liberty of the

"limits." In order not to interrupt his ministerial work, the jail limits were made to include his house and his church, so that he could still go in and out before his people. I do not think that could occur anywhere in the United States to-day.

I will close these fragmentary suggestions by saying that I, for one, should like to see this country a century from now. Those who live then will doubtless say of this period that it was crude, and rather disorderly, and fermenting with a great many new projects; but I have great faith that they will also say that the present extending notion, that the best government is for the people, by the people, was in the line of sound progress. I should expect to find faith in humanity greater and not less than it is now, and I should not expect to find that Mr. Froude's mournful expectation had been realized, and that the belief in a life beyond the grave had been withdrawn.



ENGLAND





## ENGLAND

ENGLAND has played a part in modern history altogether out of proportion to its size. The whole of Great Britain, including Ireland, has only eleven thousand more square miles than Italy; and England and Wales alone are not half so large as Italy. England alone is about the size of North Carolina. It is, as Franklin, in 1763, wrote to Mary Stevenson in London, "that petty island which, compared to America, is but a stepping-stone in a brook, scarce enough of it above water to keep one's shoes dry."

A considerable portion of it is under water, or water-soaked a good part of the year, and I suppose it has more acres for breeding frogs than any other northern land, except Holland. Old Harrison says that the North Britons when overcome by hunger used to creep into the marshes till the water was up to their chins and there remain a long time, "onlie to qualifie the heats of their stomachs by vio-

lence, which otherwise would have wrought and beene readie to oppresse them for hunger and want of sustinance." It lies so far north—the latitude of Labrador—that the winters are long and the climate inhospitable. It would be severely cold if the Gulf Stream did not make it always damp and curtain it with clouds. In some parts the soil is heavy with water, in others it is only a thin stratum above the chalk; in fact, agricultural production could scarcely be said to exist there until fortunes made in India and in other foreign adventure enabled the owners of the land to pile it knee-deep with fertilizers from Peru and elsewhere. Thanks to accumulated wealth and the Gulf Stream, its turf is green and soft; figs, which will not mature with us north of the capes of Virginia, ripen in sheltered nooks in Oxford, and the large and unfrequent strawberry sometimes appears upon the dinner-table in such profusion that the guests can indulge in one apiece.

Yet this small, originally infertile island has been for two centuries, and is to-day, the most vital influence on the globe. Cast your eye over the world upon her possessions, insular and continental, into any one of which, almost, England might be dropped, with slight dis-

turbance, as you would transfer a hanging garden. For any parallel to her power and possessions you must go back to ancient Rome. Egypt under Thotmes and Seti overran the then known world and took tribute of it; but it was a temporary wave of conquest and not an assimilation. Rome sent her laws and her roads to the end of the earth, and made an empire of it; but it was an empire of barbarians largely, of dynasties rather than of peoples. The dynasties fought, the dynasties submitted, and the dynasties paid the tribute. The modern "people" did not exist. One battle decided the fate of half the world—it might be lost or won for a woman's eyes; the flight of a chieftain might settle the fate of a province; a campaign might determine the allegiance of half Asia. There was but one compact, disciplined, law-ordered nation, and that had its seat on the Tiber.

Under what different circumstances did England win her position! Before she came to the front, Venice controlled, and almost monopolized, the trade of the Orient. When she entered upon her career Spain was almost omnipotent in Europe, and was in possession of more than half the Western world; and besides Spain, England had, wherever she went,

to contend for a foothold with Portugal, skilled in trade and adventure; and with Holland, rich, and powerful on the sea. That is to say, she met everywhere civilizations old and technically her superior. Of the ruling powers, she was the least in arts and arms. If you will take time to fill out this picture, you will have some conception of the marvellous achievements of England, say since the abdication of the Emperor Charles V.

This little island is to-day the centre of the wealth, of the solid civilization, of the world. I will not say of art, of music, of the lighter social graces that make life agreeable; but I will say of the moral forces that make progress possible and worth while. Of this island the centre is London; of London the heart is "the City," and in the City you can put your finger on one spot where the pulse of the world is distinctly felt to beat. The Moslem regards the Kaaba at Mecca as the centre of the universe; but that is only a theological phrase. The centre of the world is the Bank of England in Leadenhall Street. There is not an occurrence, not a conquest or a defeat, a revolution, a panic, a famine, an abundance, not a change in value of money or material, no depression or stoppage in trade, no recov-

ery, no political, and scarcely any great religious movement—say the civil deposition of the Pope or the Wahhabee revival in Arabia and India—that does not report itself instantly at this sensitive spot. Other capitals feel a local influence; this feels *all* the local influences. Put your ear at the door of the Bank or the Stock Exchange near by, and you hear the roar of the world.

But this is not all, nor the most striking thing, nor the greatest contrast to the empires of Rome and of Spain. The civilization that has gone forth from England is a self-sustaining one, vital to grow where it is planted, in vast communities, in an order that does not depend, as that of the Roman world did, upon edicts and legions from the capital. And it must be remembered that if the land empire of England is not so vast as that of Rome, England has for two centuries been mistress of the seas, with all the consequences of that opportunity—consequences to trade beyond computation. And we must add to all this that an intellectual and moral power has been put forth from England clear round the globe, and felt beyond the limits of the English tongue.

How is it that England has attained this

supremacy—a supremacy in vain disputed on land and on sea by France, but now threatened by an equipped and disciplined Germany, by an unformed Colossus—a Slav and Tartar conglomerate; and perhaps by one of her own children, the United States? I will mention some of the things that have determined England's extraordinary career; and they will help us to consider her prospects. I name:

1. *The Race.* It is a mixed race, but with certain dominant qualities, which we call, loosely, Teutonic; certainly the most aggressive, tough, and vigorous people the world has seen. It does not shrink from any climate, from any exposure, from any geographic condition; yet its choice of migration and of residence has mainly been on the grass belt of the globe, where soil and moisture produce good turf, where a changing and unequal climate, with extremes of heat and cold, calls out the physical resources, stimulates invention, and requires an aggressive and defensive attitude of mind and body. The early history of this people is marked by two things:

(1) Town and village organizations, nurseries of law, order, and self-dependence, *nuclei* of power, capable of indefinite expansion, lead-

ing directly to a free and a strong government, the breeders of civil liberty.

(2) Individualism in religion, Protestantism in the widest sense: I mean by this, cultivation of the individual conscience as against authority. This trait was as marked in this sturdy people in Catholic England as it is in Protestant England. It is in the blood. England never did submit to Rome, not even as France did, though the Gallic Church held out well. Take the struggle of Henry II. and the hierarchy. Read the fight with prerogative all along. The English Church never could submit. It is a shallow reading of history to attribute the final break with Rome to the unbridled passion of Henry VIII.; that was an occasion only: if it had not been that, it would have been something else.

Here we have the two necessary traits in the character of a great people: the love and the habit of civil liberty and religious conviction and independence. Allied to these is another trait—truthfulness. To speak the truth in word and action, to the verge of bluntness and offence—and with more relish sometimes because it is individually obnoxious and unlovely—is an English trait, clearly to be traced in the character of this people, notwithstanding

the equivocations of Elizabethan diplomacy, the proverbial lying of English shopkeepers, and the fraudulent adulteration of English manufactures. Not to lie is perhaps as much a matter of insular pride as of morals; to lie is unbecoming an Englishman. When Captain Burnaby was on his way to Khiva he would tolerate no Oriental exaggeration of his army rank, although a higher title would have smoothed his way and added to his consideration. An English official who was a captive at Bokhara (or Khiva) was offered his life by the Khan if he would abjure the Christian faith and say he was a Moslem; but he preferred death rather than the advantage of a temporary equivocation. I do not suppose that he was a specially pious man at home or that he was a martyr to religious principle, but for the moment Christianity stood for England and English honor and civilization. I can believe that a rough English sailor, who had not used a sacred name, except in vain, since he said his prayer at his mother's knee, accepted death under like circumstances rather than say he was not a Christian.

The next determining cause in England's career is

II. *The insular position.* Poor as the island



was, this was the opportunity. See what came of it :

(1) Maritime opportunity. The irregular coast-lines, the bays and harbors, the near islands and mainlands invited to the sea. The nation became, *per force*, sailors—as the ancient Greeks were and the modern Greeks are: adventurers, discoverers — hardy, ambitious, seeking food from the sea and wealth from every side.

(2) Their position protected them. What they got they could keep; wealth could accumulate. Invasion was difficult and practically impossible to their neighbors. And yet they were in the bustling world, close to the continent, commanding the most important of the navigable seas. The wealth of Holland was on the one hand, the wealth of France on the other. They held the keys.

(3) The insular position and their free institutions invited refugees from all the Continent, artisans and skilled laborers of all kinds. Hence, the beginning of their great industries, which made England rich in proportion as her authority and chance of trade expanded over distant islands and continents. But this would not have been possible without the third advantage which I shall mention, and that is :

III. *Coal.* England's power and wealth rested upon her coal-beds. In this bounty nature was more liberal to the tight little island than to any other spot in Western Europe, and England took early advantage of it. To be sure, her coal-field is small compared with that of the United States—an area of only 11,900 square miles to our 192,000. But Germany has only 1770; Belgium, 510; France, 2086; and Russia only in her expansion of territory leads Europe in this respect, and has now 30,000 square miles of coal-beds. But see the use England makes of this material: in 1877, she took out of the ground 134,179,968 tons. The United States the same year took out 50,000,000 tons; Germany, 48,000,000; France, 16,000,000; Belgium, 14,000,000. This tells the story of the heavy industries.

We have considered as elements of national greatness the race itself, the favorable position, and the material to work with. I need not enlarge upon the might and the possessions of England, nor the general beneficence of her occupation wherever she has established fort, factory, or colony. With her flag go much injustice, domineering, and cruelty; but, on the whole, the best elements of civilization.

The intellectual domination of England has

been as striking as the physical. It is stamped upon all her colonies ; it has by no means disappeared in the United States. For more than fifty years after our independence we imported our intellectual food—with the exception of politics, and theology in certain forms — and largely our ethical guidance from England. We read English books, or imitations of the English way of looking at things ; we even accepted the English caricatures of our own life as genuine—notably in the case of the so-called typical Yankee. It is only recently that our writers have begun to describe our own life as it is, and that readers begin to feel that our society may be as interesting in print as that English society which they have been all their lives accustomed to read about. The reading-books of children in schools were filled with English essays, stories, English views of life ; it was the English heroines over whose woes the girls wept ; it was of the English heroes that the boys declaimed. I do not know how much the imagination has to do in shaping the national character, but for half a century English writers, by poems and novels, controlled the imagination of this country. The principal reading then, as now—and perhaps more then than now — was fiction, and

nearly all of this England supplied. We took in with it, it will be noticed, not only the romance and gilding of chivalry and legitimacy, such as Scott gives us, but constant instruction in a society of ranks and degrees, orders of nobility and commonalty, a fixed social status, a well-ordered, and often attractive, permanent social inequality, a state of life and relations based upon lingering feudal conditions and prejudices. The background of all English fiction is monarchical; however liberal it may be, it must be projected upon the existing order of things. We have not been examining these foreign social conditions with that simple curiosity which leads us to look into the social life of Russia as it is depicted in Russian novels; we have, on the contrary, absorbed them generation after generation as part of our intellectual development, so that the novels and the other English literature must have had a vast influence in moulding our mental character, in shaping our thinking upon the political as well as the social constitution of states.

For a long time the one American counteraction, almost the only, to this English influence was the newspaper, which has always kept alive and diffused a distinctly American spirit—not always lovely or modest, but na-

tional. The establishment of periodicals which could afford to pay for fiction written about our society and from the American point of view has had a great effect on our literary emancipation. The wise men whom we elect to make our laws—and who represent us intellectually and morally a good deal better than we sometimes like to admit—have always gone upon the theory, with regard to the reading for the American people, that the chief requisite of it was cheapness, with no regard to its character so far as it is a shaper of notions about government and social life. What educating influence English fiction was having upon American life they have not inquired, so long as it was furnished cheap, and its authors were cheated out of any copyright on it.

At the North, thanks to a free press and periodicals, to a dozen reform agitations, and to the intellectual stir generally accompanying industries and commerce, we have been developing an immense intellectual activity, a portion of which has found expression in fiction, in poetry, in essays, that are instinct with American life and aspiration ; so that now for over thirty years, in the field of literature, we have had a vigorous offset to the English

intellectual domination of which I spoke. How far this has in the past moulded American thought and sentiment, in what degree it should be held responsible for the infidelity in regard to our "American experiment," I will not undertake to say. The South furnishes a very interesting illustration in this connection. When the civil war broke down the barriers of intellectual non-intercourse behind which the South had ensconced itself, it was found to be in a colonial condition. Its libraries were English libraries, mostly composed of old English literature. Its literary growth stopped with the reign of George III. Its latest news was the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*. The social order it covered was that of monarchical England, undisturbed by the fiery philippics of Byron or Shelley or the radicalism of a manufacturing age. Its chivalry was an imitation of the antiquated age of lords and ladies, and tournaments, and buckram courtesies, when men were as touchy to fight, at the lift of an eyelid or the drop of a glove, as Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and as ready for a drinking-bout as Christopher North. The intellectual stir of the North, with its disorganizing radicalism, was rigorously excluded, and with it all the new life pouring out of

its presses. The South was tied to a republic, but it was not republican, either in its politics or its social order. It was, in its mental constitution, in its prejudices, in its tastes, exactly what you would expect a people to be, excluded from the circulation of free ideas by its system of slavery, and fed on the English literature of a century ago. I dare say that a majority of its reading public, at any time, would have preferred a monarchical system and a hierarchy of rank.

To return to England. I have said that English domination usually carries the best elements of civilization. Yet it must be owned that England has pursued her magnificent career in a policy often insolent and brutal, and generally selfish. Scarcely any considerations have stood in the way of her trade and profit. I will not dwell upon her opium culture in India, which is a proximate cause of famine in district after district, nor upon her forcing the drug upon China—a policy disgraceful to a Christian queen and people. We have only just got rid of slavery, sustained so long by Biblical and official sanction, and may not yet set up as critics. But I will refer to a case with which all are familiar—England's treatment of her American colonies. In 1760

and onward, when Franklin, the agent of the colonies of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, was cooling his heels in lords' waiting-rooms in London, America was treated exactly as Ireland was—that is, discriminated against in every way; not allowed to manufacture; not permitted to trade with other nations, except under the most vexatious restrictions; and the effort was continued to make her a mere agricultural producer and a dependent. All that England cared for us was that we should be a market for her manufactures. This same selfishness has been the key-note of her policy down to the present day, except as the force of circumstances has modified it. Steadily pursued, it has contributed largely to make England the monetary and industrial master of the world.

With this outline I pass to her present condition and outlook.

The dictatorial and selfish policy has been forced to give way somewhat in regard to the colonies. The spirit of the age and the strength of the colonies forbid its exercise; they cannot be held by the old policy. Australia boldly adopts a protective tariff, and her parliament is only nominally controlled by the crown. Canada exacts duties on Eng-



lish goods, and England cannot help herself. Even with these concessions, can England keep her great colonies? They are still loyal in word. They still affect English manners and English speech, and draw their intellectual supplies from England. On the prospect of a war with Russia they nearly all offered volunteers. But everybody knows that allegiance is on the condition of local autonomy. If united Canada asks to go, she will go. So with Australia. It may be safely predicted that England will never fight again to hold the sovereignty of her new-world possessions against their present occupants. And, in the judgment of many good observers, a dissolution of the empire, so far as the Western colonies are concerned, is inevitable, unless Great Britain, adopting the plan urged by Franklin, becomes an imperial federation, with parliaments distinct and independent, the crown the only bond of union—the crown, and not the English parliament, being the titular and actual sovereign. Sovereign power over America in the parliament Franklin never would admit. His idea was that all the inhabitants of the empire must be citizens, not some of them subjects ruled by the home citizens.

The two great political parties of England

are really formed on lines constructed after the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832. The Tories had been long in power. They had made many changes and popular concessions, but they resisted parliamentary reform. The great Whig lords, who had tried to govern England without the people and in opposition to the crown in the days of George III., had learned to seek popular support. The Reform Bill, which was ultimately forced through by popular pressure and threat of civil war, abolished the rotten boroughs, gave representation to the large manufacturing towns and increased representation to the counties, and the suffrage to all men who had paid ten pounds a year rent in boroughs, or in the counties owned land worth ten pounds a year or paid fifty pounds rent. The immediate result of this was to put power into the hands of the middle classes and to give the lower classes high hopes, so that, in 1839, the Chartist movement began, one demand of which was universal suffrage. The old party names of Whig and Tory had been dropped and the two parties had assumed their present appellations of Conservatives and Liberals. Both parties had, however, learned that there was no rest for any ruling party except a popular basis, and

the Conservative party had the good sense to strengthen itself in 1867 by carrying through Mr. Disraeli's bill, which gave the franchise in boroughs to all householders paying rates, and in counties to all occupiers of property rated at fifteen pounds a year. This broadening of the suffrage places the power irrevocably in the hands of the people, against whose judgment neither crown nor ministry can venture on any important step.

In general terms it may be said that of these two great parties the Conservative wishes to preserve existing institutions, and latterly has leaned to the prerogatives of the crown, and the Liberal is inclined to progress and reform, and to respond to changes demanded by the people. Both parties, however, like parties elsewhere, propose and oppose measures and movements, and accept or reject policies, simply to get office or keep office. The Conservative party of late years, principally because it has the simple task of holding back, has been better able to define its lines and preserve a compact organization. The Liberals, with a multitude of reformatory projects, have, of course, a less homogeneous organization, and for some years have been without well-defined issues. The Conservative aristocracy seemed

to form a secure alliance with the farmers and the great agricultural interests, and at the same time to have a strong hold upon the lower classes. In what his opponents called his "policy of adventure," Lord Beaconsfield had the support of the lower populace. The Liberal party is an incongruous host. On one wing are the Whig lords and great land-owners, who cannot be expected to take kindly to a land reform that would reform them out of territorial power; and on the other wing are the Radicals, who would abolish the present land system and the crown itself, and institute the rule of a democracy. Between these two is the great body of the middle class, a considerable portion of the educated and university trained, the majorities of the manufacturing towns, and perhaps, we may say, generally the Nonconformists. There are some curious analogies in these two parties to our own parties before the war. It is, perhaps, not fanciful to suppose that the Conservative lords resemble our own aristocratic leaders of democracy, who contrived to keep near the people and had affiliations that secured them the vote of the least educated portion of the voters; while the great Liberal lords are not unlike our old aristocratic Whigs, of the cotton

order, who have either little sympathy with the people or little faculty of showing it. It is a curious fact that during our civil war respect for authority gained us as much sympathy from the Conservatives, as love for freedom (hampered by the greed of trade and rivalry in manufactures) gained us from the Liberals.

To return to the question of empire. The bulk of the Conservative party would hold the colonies if possible, and pursue an imperial policy; while certainly a large portion of the Liberals—not all, by any means—would let the colonies go, and, with the Manchester school, hope to hold England's place by free-trade and active competition. The imperial policy may be said to have two branches, in regard to which parties will not sharply divide: one is the relations to be held towards the Western colonies, and the other in the policy to be pursued in the East in reference to India and to the development of the Indian empire, and also the policy of aggression and subjection in South Africa.

An imperial policy does not necessarily imply such vagaries as the forcible detention of the forcibly annexed Boer republic. But everybody sees that the time is near when

England must say definitely as to the imperial policy generally whether it will pursue it or abandon it. And it may be remarked in passing that the Gladstone government, thus far, though pursuing this policy more moderately than the Beaconsfield government, shows no intention of abandoning it. Almost everybody admits that if it is abandoned England must sink to the position of a third-rate power like Holland. For what does abandonment mean? It means to have no weight, except that of moral example, in Continental affairs: to relinquish her advantages in the Mediterranean; to let Turkey be absorbed by Russia; to become so weak in India as to risk rebellion of all the provinces, and probable attack from Russia and her Central Asian allies. But this is not all. Lost control in Asia is lost trade; this is evident in every foot of control Russia has gained in the Caucasus, about the Caspian Sea, in Persia. There Russian manufactures supplant the English; and so in another quarter: in order to enjoy the vast opening trade of Africa, England must be on hand with an exhibition of power. We might show by a hundred examples that the imperial idea in England does not rest on pride alone, on national glory altogether, though that is

a large element in it, but on trade instincts. "Trade follows the flag" is a well-known motto; and that means that the lines of commerce follow the limits of empire.

Take India as an illustration. Why should England care to keep India? In the last forty years the total revenue from India, set down up to 1880 as £1,517,000,000, has been £53,000,000 less than the expenditure. It varies with the years, and occasionally the balance is favorable, as in 1879, when the expenditure was £63,400,000 and the revenue was £64,400,000. But to offset this average deficit the very profitable trade of India, which is mostly in British hands, swells the national wealth; and this trade would not be so largely in British hands if the flag were away.

But this is not the only value of India. Grasp on India is part of the vast Oriental network of English trade and commerce, the carrying trade, the supply of cotton and iron goods. This largely depends upon English prestige in the Orient, and to lose India is to lose the grip. On practically the same string with India are Egypt, Central Africa, and the Euphrates valley. A vast empire of trade opens out. To sink the imperial policy is to shut this vision. With Russia pressing

on one side and America competing on the other, England cannot afford to lose her military lines, her control of the sea, her prestige.

Again, India offers to the young and the adventurous a career, military, civil, or commercial. This is of great weight—great social weight. One of the chief wants of England to-day is careers and professions for her sons. The population of the United Kingdom in 1876 was estimated at near thirty-four millions; in the last few decades the decennial increase had been considerably over two millions; at that rate the population in 1900 would be near forty millions. How can they live in their narrow limits? They must emigrate, go for good, or seek employment and means of wealth in some such vast field as India. Take away India now, and you cut off the career of hundreds of thousands of young Englishmen, and the hope of tens of thousands of households.

There is another aspect of the case which it would be unfair to ignore. Opportunity is the measure of a nation's responsibility. I have no doubt that Mr. Thomas Hughes spoke for a very respectable portion of Christian England, in 1861, when he wrote Mr. James Rus-



sell Lowell, in a prefatory note to *Tom Brown at Oxford*, these words :

“ The great tasks of the world are only laid on the strongest shoulders. We, who have India to guide and train, who have for our task the educating of her wretched people into free men, who feel that the work cannot be shifted from ourselves, and must be done as God would have it done, at the peril of England’s own life, can and do feel for you.”

It is safe, we think, to say that if the British Empire is to be dissolved, disintegration cannot be permitted to begin at home. Ireland has always been a thorn in the side of England. And the policy towards it could not have been much worse, either to impress it with a respect for authority or to win it by conciliation ; it has been a strange mixture of untimely concession and untimely cruelty. The problem, in fact, has physical and race elements that make it almost insolvable. A water-logged country, of which nothing can surely be predicted but the uncertainty of its harvests, inhabited by a people of most peculiar mental constitution, alien in race, temperament, and religion, having scarcely one point of sympathy with the English. But geography settles some things in this world, and the act of union that bound Ireland to the United Kingdom in 1800 was

as much a necessity of the situation as the act of union that obliterated the boundary line between Scotland and England in 1707. The Irish parliament was confessedly a failure, and it is scarcely within the possibilities that the experiment will be tried again. Irish independence, so far as English consent is concerned, and until England's power is utterly broken, is a dream. Great changes will doubtless be made in the tenure and transfer of land, and these changes will react upon England to the ultimate abasement of the landed aristocracy; but this equalization of conditions would work no consent to separation. The undeniable growth of the democratic spirit in England can no more be relied on to bring it about, when we remember what renewed executive vigor and cohesion existed with the Commonwealth and the fiery foreign policy of the first republic of France. For three years past we have seen the British Empire in peril on all sides, with the addition of depression and incipient rebellion at home, but her horizon is not as dark as it was in 1780, when, with a failing cause in America, England had the whole of Europe against her.

In any estimate of the prospects of England we must take into account the recent

marked changes in the social condition. Mr. Escott has an instructive chapter on this in his excellent book on England. He notices that the English character is losing its insularity, is more accessible to foreign influences, and is adopting foreign, especially French, modes of living. Country life is losing its charm; domestic life is changed; people live in "flats" more and more, and the idea of home is not what it was; marriage is not exactly what it was; the increased free and independent relations of the sexes are somewhat demoralizing; women are a little intoxicated with their newly-acquired freedom; social scandals are more frequent. It should be said, however, that perhaps the present perils are due not to the new system, but to the fact that it is new; when the novelty is worn off the peril may cease.

Mr. Escott notices primogeniture as one of the stable and, curious enough, one of the democratic institutions of society. It is owing to primogeniture that while there is a nobility in England there is no *noblesse*. If titles and lands went to all the children there would be the multitudinous *noblesse* of the Continent. Now, by primogeniture, enough is retained for a small nobility, but all the younger sons must

go into the world and make a living. The three respectable professions no longer offer sufficient inducement, and they crowd more and more into trade. Thus the middle class is constantly recruited from the upper. Besides, the upper is all the time recruited from the wealthy middle; the union of aristocracy and plutocracy may be said to be complete. But merit makes its way continually from even the lower ranks upward, in the professions, in the army, the law, the church, in letters, in trade, and, what Mr. Escott does not mention, in the reformed civil service, newly opened to the humblest lad in the land. Thus there is constant movement up and down in social England, approaching, except in the traditional nobility, the freedom of movement in our own country. This is all wholesome and sound. Even the nobility itself, driven by *ennui*, or a loss of former political control, or by the necessity of more money to support inherited estates, goes into business, into journalism, writes books, enters the professions.

What are the symptoms of decay in England? Unless the accumulation of wealth is a symptom of decay, I do not see many. I look at the people themselves. It seems to me that never in their history were they more

full of vigor. See what travellers, explorers, adventurers they are. See what sportsmen, in every part of the globe, how much they endure, and how hale and jolly they are—women as well as men. The race, certainly, has not decayed. And look at letters. It may be said that this is not the age of pure literature—and I'm sure I hope the English patent for producing machine novels will not be infringed—but the English language was never before written so vigorously, so clearly, and to such purpose. And this is shown even in the excessive refinement and elaboration of trifles, the minutia of reflection, the keenness of analysis, the unrelenting pursuit of every social topic into subtleties untouched by the older essayists. And there is still more vigor, without affectation, in scientific investigation, in the daily conquests made in the realm of social economy, the best methods of living and getting the most out of life. Art also keeps pace with luxury, and shows abundant life and promise for the future.

I believe, from these and other considerations, that this vigorous people will find a way out of its present embarrassment, and a way out without retreating. For myself, I like to see the English sort of civilization

spreading over the world rather than the Russian or the French. I hope England will hang on to the East, and not give it over to the havoc of squabbling tribes, with a dozen religions and five hundred dialects, or to the military despotism of an empire whose morality is only matched by the superstition of its religion.

The relations of England and the United States are naturally of the first interest to us. Our love and our hatred have always been that of true relatives. For three-quarters of a century our *amour propre* was constantly kept raw by the most supercilious patronage. During the past decade, when the quality of England's regard has become more and more a matter of indifference to us, we have been the subject of a more intelligent curiosity, of increased respect, accompanied with a sincere desire to understand us. In the diplomatic scale Washington still ranks below the Sublime Porte, but this anomaly is due to tradition, and does not represent England's real estimate of the status of the republic. There is, and must be, a good deal of selfishness mingled in our friendship—patriotism itself being a form of selfishness—but our ideas of civilization so nearly coincide, and

we have so many common aspirations for humanity that we must draw nearer together, notwithstanding old grudges and present differences in social structure. Our intercourse is likely to be closer, our business relations will become more inseparable. I can conceive of nothing so lamentable for the progress of the world as a quarrel between these two English-speaking people.

But, in one respect, we are likely to diverge. I refer to literature; in that, assimilation is neither probable nor desirable. We were brought up on the literature of England; our first efforts were imitations of it; we were criticised — we criticised ourselves — on its standards. We compared every new aspirant in letters to some English writer. We were patted on the back if we resembled the English models; we were stared at or sneered at if we did not. When we began to produce something that was the product of our own soil and our own social conditions, it was still judged by the old standards, or, if it was too original for that, it was only accepted because it was curious or bizarre, interesting for its oddity. The criticism that we received for our best was evidently founded on such indifference or toleration that it was galling. At first we

were surprised; then we were grieved; then we were indignant. We have long ago ceased to be either surprised, grieved, or indignant at anything the English critics say of us. We have recovered our balance. We know that since Gulliver there has been no piece of original humor produced in England equal to *Knickerbocker's New York*; that not in this century has any English writer equalled the wit and satire of the *Biglow Papers*. We used to be irritated at what we called the snobbishness of English critics of a certain school; we are so no longer, for we see that its criticism is only the result of ignorance—simply of inability to understand.

And we the more readily pardon it, because of the inability we have to understand English conditions, and the English dialect, which has more and more diverged from the language as it was at the time of the separation. We have so constantly read English literature, and kept ourselves so well informed of their social life, as it is exhibited in novels and essays, that we are not so much in the dark with regard to them as they are with regard to us; still we are more and more bothered by the insular dialect. I do not propose to criticise it; it is our misfortune,



perhaps our fault, that we do not understand it; and I only refer to it to say that we should not be too hard on the *Saturday Review* critic when he is complaining of the American dialect in the English that Mr. Howells writes. How can the Englishman be expected to come into sympathy with the fiction that has New England for its subject—from Hawthorne's down to that of our present novelists—when he is ignorant of the whole background on which it is cast; when all the social conditions are an enigma to him; when, if he has, historically, some conception of Puritan society, he cannot have a glimmer of comprehension of the subtle modifications and changes it has undergone in a century! When he visits America and sees it, it is a puzzle to him. How, then, can he be expected to comprehend it when it is depicted to the life in books?

No, we must expect a continual divergence in our literatures. And it is best that there should be. There can be no development of a nation's literature worth anything that is not on its own lines, out of its own native materials. We must not expect that the English will understand that literature that expresses our national life, character, conditions, any better than they understand that of the

French or of the Germans. And, on our part, the day has come when we receive their literary efforts with the same respectful desire to be pleased with them that we have to like their dress and their speech.

(1882.)

THE ENGLISH VOLUNTEERS DURING  
THE LATE INVASION



## THE ENGLISH VOLUNTEERS DURING THE LATE INVASION

THE most painful event since the bombardment of Alexandria has been what is called by an English writer the "invasion" of "American Literature in England." The hostile forces, with an advanced guard of what was regarded as an "awkward squad," had been gradually effecting a landing and a lodgment not unwelcome to the unsuspicious natives. No alarm was taken when they threw out a skirmish-line of magazines and began to deploy an occasional wild poet, who advanced in buckskin leggings, revolver in hand, or a stray sharp-shooting sketcher clad in the picturesque robes of the sunset. But when the main body of American novelists got fairly ashore and into position the literary militia of the island rose up as one man, with the strength of a thousand, to repel the invaders and sweep them back across the Atlantic. The spectacle had a dramatic interest.

The invaders were not numerous, did not carry their native tomahawks, they had been careful to wash off the frightful paint with which they usually go into action, they did not utter the defiant whoop of Pogram, and even the militia regarded them as on the whole "amusin' young 'possums"—and yet all the resources of modern and ancient warfare were brought to bear upon them. There was a crack of revolvers from the daily press, a lively fusillade of small-arms in the astonished weeklies, a discharge of point-blank blunderbusses from the monthlies; and some of the heavy quarterlies loaded up the old pieces of ordnance, that had not been charged in forty years, with slugs and brickbats and junk-bottles, and poured in raking broadsides. The effect on the island was something tremendous: it shook and trembled, and was almost hidden in the smoke of the conflict. What the effect is upon the invaders it is too soon to determine. If any of them survive, it will be God's mercy to his weak and innocent children.

It must be said that the American people—such of them as were aware of this uprising—took the punishment of their presumption in a sweet and forgiving spirit. If they did

not feel that they deserved it, they regarded it as a valuable contribution to the study of sociology and race characteristics, in which they have taken a lively interest of late. We know how it is ourselves, they said; we used to be thin-skinned and self-conscious and sensitive. We used to wince and cringe under English criticism, and try to strike back in a blind fury. We have learned that criticism is good for us, and we are grateful for it from any source. We have learned that English criticism is dictated by love for us, by a warm interest in our intellectual development, just as English anxiety about our revenue laws is based upon a yearning that our down-trodden millions shall enjoy the benefits of free-trade. We did not understand why a country that admits our beef and grain and cheese should seem to seek protection against a literary product which is brought into competition with one of the great British staples, the modern novel. It seemed inconsistent. But we are no more consistent ourselves. We cannot understand the action of our own Congress, which protects the American author by a round duty on foreign books and refuses to protect him by granting a foreign copy-right; or, to put it in another way, is willing

to steal the brains of the foreign author under the plea of free knowledge, but taxes free knowledge in another form. We have no defence to make of the state of international copyright, though we appreciate the complication of the matter in the conflicting interests of English and American publishers.

Yes; we must insist that, under the circumstances, the American people have borne this outburst of English criticism in an admirable spirit. It was as unexpected as it was sudden. Now, for many years our international relations have been uncommonly smooth, oiled every few days by complimentary banquet speeches, and sweetened by abundance of magazine and newspaper "taffy." Something too much of "taffy" we have thought was given us at times, for, in getting bigger in various ways, we have grown more modest. Though our English admirers may not believe it, we see our own faults more clearly than we once did—thanks, partly, to the faithful castigations of our friends—and we sometimes find it difficult to conceal our blushes when we are over-praised. We fancied that we were going on, as an English writer on "Down-Easters" used to say, as "slick as ile," when this miniature tempest suddenly burst



out in a revival of the language and methods used in the redoubtable old English periodicals forty years ago. We were interested in seeing how exactly this sort of criticism that slew our literary fathers was revived now for the execution of their degenerate children. And yet it was not exactly the same. We used to call it "slang-whanging." One form of it was a blank surprise at the pretensions of American authors, and a dismissal with the formula of previous ignorance of their existence. This is modified now by a modest expression of "discomfiture" on reading of American authors "whose very names, much less peculiarities, we never heard of before." This is a tribunal from which there is no appeal. Not to have been heard of by an Englishman is next door to annihilation. It is at least discouraging to an author who may think he has gained some reputation over what is now conceded to be a considerable portion of the earth's surface, to be cast into total obscurity by the negative damnation of English ignorance. There is to us something pathetic in this and in the surprise of the English critic, that there can be any standard of respectable achievement outside of a seven-miles radius turning on Charing Cross.

The pathetic aspect of the case has not, however, we are sorry to say, struck the American press, which has too often treated with unbecoming levity this unaccountable exhibition of English sensitiveness. There has been little reply to it ; at most, generally only an amused report of the war, and now and then a discriminating acceptance of some of the criticism as just, with a friendly recognition of the fact that on the whole the critic had done very well considering the limitation of his knowledge of the subject on which he wrote. What is certainly noticeable is an entire absence of the irritation that used to be caused by similar comments on America thirty years ago. Perhaps the Americans are reserving their fire as their ancestors did at Bunker Hill, conscious, maybe, that in the end they will be driven out of their slight literary intrenchments. Perhaps they were disarmed by the fact that the acrid criticism in the London *Quarterly Review* was accompanied by a cordial appreciation of the novels that seemed to the reviewer characteristically American. The interest in the latter's review of our poor field must be languid, however, for nobody has taken the trouble to remind its author that Brockden

Brown—who is cited as a typical American writer, true to local character, scenery, and color—put no more flavor of American life and soil in his books than is to be found in *Frankenstein*.

It does not, I should suppose, lie in the way of *The Century*, whose general audience on both sides of the Atlantic takes only an amused interest in this singular revival of a traditional literary animosity—an anachronism in these tolerant days when the reading world cares less and less about the origin of literature that pleases it—it does not lie in the way of *The Century* to do more than report this phenomenal literary effervescence. And yet it cannot escape a certain responsibility as an immediate though innocent occasion of this exhibition of international courtesy, because its last November number contained some papers that seem to have been irritating. In one of them Mr. Howells let fall some chance remarks on the tendency of modern fiction, without adequately developing his theory, which were largely dissented from in this country, and were like the uncorking of six vials in England. The other was an essay on England, dictated by admiration for the achievements of the foremost nation of our time, which,

from the awkwardness of the eulogist, was unfortunately the uncorking of the seventh vial—an uncorking which, as we happen to know, so prostrated the writer that he resolved never to attempt to praise England again. His panic was somewhat allayed by the soothing remark in a kindly paper in *Blackwood's Magazine* for January, that the writer had discussed his theme “by no means unfairly or disrespectfully.” But with a shudder he recognized what a peril he had escaped. Great Scott!—the reference is to a local American deity who is invoked in war, and not to the Biblical commentator—what would have happened to him if he had spoken of England “disrespectfully”!

We gratefully acknowledge also the remark of the *Blackwood* writer in regard to the claims of America in literature. “These claims,” he says, “we have hitherto been very charitable to.” How our life depends upon a continual exhibition by the critics of this divine attribute of charity it would perhaps be unwise in us to confess. We can at least take courage that it exists—who does not need it in this world of misunderstandings?—since we know that charity is not puffed up, vaunteth not itself, hopeth all things, endureth all

things, is not easily provoked ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish ; but charity never faileth. And when all our "dialects" on both sides of the water shall vanish, and we shall speak no more Yorkshire or Cape Cod, or London cockney or "Pike" or "Cracker" vowel flatness, nor write them any more, but all use the noble simplicity of the ideal English, and not indulge in such odd-sounding phrases as this of our critic that "the combatants on both sides were by way of detesting each other," though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels—we shall still need charity.

It will occur to the charitable that the Americans are at a disadvantage in this little international "tiff." For while the offenders have inconsiderately written over their own names, the others preserve a privileged anonymity. Any attempt to reply to these voices out of the dark reminds one of the famous duel between the Englishman and the Frenchman which took place in a pitch-dark chamber, with the frightful result that when the tender-hearted Englishman discharged his revolver up the chimney he brought down his man. One never can tell in a case of this

kind but a charitable shot might bring down a valued friend or even a peer of the realm.

In all soberness, however, and setting aside the open question, which country has most diverged from the English as it was at the time of the separation of the colonies from the mother-land, we may be permitted a word or two in the hope of a better understanding. The offence in *The Century* paper on "England" seems to have been in phrases such as these: "When we began to produce something that was the product of our own soil and of our own social conditions, it was still judged by the old standards;" and, we are no longer irritated by "the snobbishness of English critics of a certain school," "for we see that its criticism is only the result of ignorance—simply of inability to understand."

Upon this the reviewer affects to lose his respiration, and with "a gasp of incredulity" wants to know what the writer means, "and what standards he proposes to himself when he has given up the English ones?" The reviewer makes a more serious case than the writer intended, or than a fair construction of the context of his phrases warrants. It is the criticism of "a certain school" only that was said to be the result of ignorance. It is not

the English language nor its body of enduring literature—the noblest monument of our common civilization—that the writer objected to as a standard of our performances. The standard objected to is the narrow insular one (the term “insular” is used purely as a geographical one) that measures life, social conditions, feeling, temperament, and national idiosyncrasies expressed in our literature by certain fixed notions prevalent in England. Probably also the expression of national peculiarities would diverge somewhat from the “old standards.” All we thought of asking was that allowance should be made for this expression and these peculiarities, as it would be made in case of other literatures and peoples. It might have occurred to our critics, we used to think, to ask themselves whether the English literature is not elastic enough to permit the play of forces in it which are foreign to their experience. Genuine literature is the expression, we take it, of life—and truth to that is the standard of its success. Reference was intended to this, and not to the common canons of literary art. But we have given up the expectation that the English critic “of a certain school” will take this view of it, and this is the plain reason—not intended to be offensive—

why much of the English criticism has ceased to be highly valued in this country, and why it has ceased to annoy. At the same time, it ought to be added, English opinion, when it is seen to be based upon knowledge, is as highly respected as ever. And nobody in America, so far as we know, entertains, or ever entertained, the idea of setting aside as standards the master-minds in British literature.

In regard to the "inability to understand," we can, perhaps, make ourselves more clearly understood, for the *Blackwood's* reviewer has kindly furnished us an illustration in this very paper, when he passes in patronizing review the novels of Mr. Howells. In discussing the character of Lydia Blood, in *The Lady of the Aroostook*, he is exceedingly puzzled by the fact that a girl from rural New England, brought up amid surroundings homely in the extreme, should have been considered a lady. He says:

"The really 'American thing' in it is, we think, quite undiscovered either by the author or his heroes, and that is the curious confusion of classes which attributes to a girl brought up on the humblest level all the prejudices and necessities of the highest society. Granting that there was anything dreadful in it, the daughter of a homely small farmer in England is not guarded and accompanied like a young lady on her journeys from one



place to another. Probably her mother at home would be disturbed, like Lydia's aunt, at the thought that there was no woman on board, in case her child should be ill or lonely ; but, as for any impropriety, would never think twice on that subject. The difference is that the English girl would not be a young lady. She would find her sweetheart among the sailors, and would have nothing to say to the gentlemen. This difference is far more curious than the misadventure, which might have happened anywhere, and far more remarkable than the fact that the gentlemen did behave to her like gentlemen, and did their best to set her at ease, which we hope would have happened anywhere else. But it is, we think, exclusively American, and very curious and interesting, that this young woman, with her antecedents so distinctly set before us, should be represented as a lady, not at all out of place among her cultivated companions, and ready to become an ornament of society the moment she lands in Venice."

Reams of writing could not more clearly explain what is meant by "inability to understand" American conditions and to judge fairly the literature growing out of them ; and reams of writing would be wasted in the attempt to make our curious critic comprehend the situation. There is nothing in his experience of "farmers' daughters" to give him the key to it. We might tell him that his notion of a farmer's daughters in England does not apply to New England. We might tell him of a sort of society of which he has no

conception and can have none, of farmers' daughters and farmers' wives in New England — more numerous, let us confess, thirty or forty years ago than now — who lived in homely conditions, dressed with plainness, and followed the fashions afar off; did their own household work, even the menial parts of it; cooked the meals for the "men folks" and the "hired help," made the butter and cheese, and performed their half of the labor that wrung an honest but not luxurious living from the reluctant soil. And yet those women — the sweet and gracious ornaments of a self-respecting society — were full of spirit, of modest pride in their position, were familiar with much good literature, could converse with piquaney and understanding on subjects of general interest, were trained in the subtleties of a solid theology, and bore themselves in any company with that traditional breeding which we associate with the name of lady. Such strong native sense had they, such innate refinement and courtesy — the product, it used to be said, of plain living and high thinking — that, ignorant as they might be of civic ways, they would, upon being introduced to them, need only a brief space of time to "orient" themselves to the new circumstances.

Much more of this sort might be said without exaggeration. To us there is nothing incongruous in the supposition that Lydia Blood was "ready to become an ornament to society the moment she lands in Venice."

But we lack the missionary spirit necessary to the exertion to make our interested critic comprehend such a social condition, and we prefer to leave ourselves to his charity, in the hope of the continuance of which we rest in serenity.

(1883.)



THE NOVEL AND THE COMMON  
SCHOOL



## THE NOVEL AND THE COMMON SCHOOL

THERE has been a great improvement in the physical condition of the people of the United States within two generations. This is more noticeable in the West than in the East, but it is marked everywhere; and the foreign traveller who once detected a race deterioration, which he attributed to a dry and stimulating atmosphere and to a feverish anxiety, which was evident in all classes, for a rapid change of condition, finds very little now to sustain his theory. Although the restless energy continues, the mixed race in America has certainly changed physically for the better. Speaking generally, the contours of face and form are more rounded. The change is most marked in regions once noted for leanness, angularity, and sallowness of complexion, but throughout the country the types of physical manhood are more numerous; and if women of rare and exceptional beauty are not

more numerous, no doubt the average of comeliness and beauty has been raised. Thus far, the increase of beauty due to better development has not been at the expense of delicacy of complexion and of line, as it has been in some European countries.

Physical well-being is almost entirely a matter of nutrition. Something is due in our case to the accumulation of money, to the decrease in an increasing number of our population of the daily anxiety about food and clothes, to more leisure; but abundant and better-prepared food is the direct agency in our physical change. Good food is not only more abundant and more widely distributed than it was two generations ago, but it is to be had in immeasurably greater variety. No other people existing, or that ever did exist, could command such a variety of edible products for daily consumption as the mass of the American people habitually use to-day. In consequence they have the opportunity of being better nourished than any other people ever were. If they are not better nourished, it is because their food is badly prepared. Whenever we find, either in New England or in the South, a community ill-favored, dyspeptic, lean, and faded in complexion, we may



be perfectly sure that its cooking is bad, and that it is too ignorant of the laws of health to procure that variety of food which is so easily obtainable. People who still diet on sodden pie and the products of the frying-pan of the pioneers, and then, in order to promote digestion, attempt to imitate the patient cow by masticating some elastic and fragrant gum, are doing very little to bring in that universal physical health or beauty which is the natural heritage of our opportunity.

Now, what is the relation of our intellectual development to this physical improvement? It will be said that the general intelligence is raised, that the habit of reading is much more wide-spread, and that the increase of books, periodicals, and newspapers shows a greater mental activity than existed formerly. It will also be said that the opportunity for education was never before so nearly universal. If it is not yet true everywhere that all children must go to school, it is true that all may go to school free of cost. Without doubt, also, great advance has been made in American scholarship, in specialized learning and investigation; that is to say, the proportion of scholars of the first rank in literature and in science is much larger to the population than a generation ago.

But what is the relation of our general intellectual life to popular education? Or, in other words, what effect is popular education having upon the general intellectual habit and taste? There are two ways of testing this. One is by observing whether the mass of minds is better trained and disciplined than formerly, less liable to delusions, better able to detect fallacies, more logical, and less likely to be led away by novelties in speculation, or by theories that are unsupported by historic evidence or that are contradicted by a knowledge of human nature. If we were tempted to pursue this test, we should be forced to note the seeming anomaly of a scientific age peculiarly credulous; the ease with which any charlatan finds followers; the common readiness to fall in with any theory of progress which appeals to the sympathies, and to accept the wildest notions of social reorganization. We should be obliged to note also, among scientific men themselves, a disposition to come to conclusions on inadequate evidence—a disposition usually due to one-sided education which lacks metaphysical training and the philosophic habit. Multitudes of fairly intelligent people are afloat without any baseline of thought to which they can refer new


suggestions; just as many politicians are floundering about for want of an apprehension of the Constitution of the United States and of the historic development of society. An honest acceptance of the law of gravitation would banish many popular delusions; a comprehension that something cannot be made out of nothing would dispose of others; and the application of the ordinary principles of evidence, such as men require to establish a title to property, would end most of the remaining. How far is our popular education, which we have now enjoyed for two full generations, responsible for this state of mind? If it has not encouraged it, has it done much to correct it?

The other test of popular education is in the kind of reading sought and enjoyed by the majority of the American people. As the greater part of this reading is admitted to be fiction, we have before us the relation of the novel to the common school. As the common school is our universal method of education, and the novels most in demand are those least worthy to be read, we may consider this subject in two aspects: the encouragement, by neglect or by teaching, of the taste that demands this kind of fiction, and the tendency

of the novel to become what this taste demands.

Before considering the common school, however, we have to notice a phenomenon in letters—namely, the evolution of the modern newspaper as a vehicle for general reading-matter. Not content with giving the news, or even with creating news and increasing its sensational character, it grasps at the wider field of supplying reading material for the million, usurping the place of books and to a large extent of periodicals. The effect of this new departure in journalism is beginning to attract attention. An increasing number of people read nothing except the newspapers. Consequently, they get little except scraps and bits; no subject is considered thoroughly or exhaustively; and they are furnished with not much more than the small change for superficial conversation. The habit of excessive newspaper reading, in which a great variety of topics is inadequately treated, has a curious effect on the mind. It becomes demoralized, gradually loses the power of concentration or of continuous thought, and even loses the inclination to read the long articles which the newspaper prints. The eye catches a thousand things, but is detained

by no one. Variety, which in limitations is wholesome in literary as well as in physical diet, creates dyspepsia when it is excessive, and when the literary viands are badly cooked and badly served the evil is increased. The mind loses the power of discrimination, the taste is lowered, and the appetite becomes diseased. The effect of this scrappy, desultory reading is bad enough when the hashed compound selected is tolerably good. It becomes a very serious matter when the reading itself is vapid, frivolous, or bad. The responsibility of selecting the mental food for millions of people is serious. When, in the last century, in England, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Information, which accomplished so much good, was organized, this responsibility was felt, and competent hands prepared the popular books and pamphlets that were cheap in price and widely diffused. Now, it happens that a hundred thousand people, perhaps a million in some cases, surrender the right of the all-important selection of the food for their minds to some unknown and irresponsible person whose business it is to choose the miscellaneous reading-matter for a particular newspaper. His or her taste may be good, or it may be immature and vicious ; it may be



used simply to create a sensation; and yet the million of readers get nothing except what this one person chooses they shall read. It is an astonishing abdication of individual preference. Day after day, Sunday after Sunday, they read only what this unknown person selects for them. Instead of going to the library and cultivating their own tastes, and pursuing some subject that will increase their mental vigor and add to their permanent stock of thought, they fritter away their time upon a hash of literature chopped up for them by a person possibly very unfit even to make good hash. The mere statement of this surrender of one's judgment of what shall be his intellectual life is alarming.

But the modern newspaper is no doubt a natural evolution in our social life. As everything has a cause, it would be worth while to inquire whether the encyclopædic newspaper is in response to a demand, to a taste created by our common schools. Or, to put the question in another form, does the system of education in our common schools give the pupils a taste for good literature or much power of discrimination? Do they come out of school with the habit of continuous reading, of reading books, or only of picking up scraps in the

newspapers, as they might snatch a hasty meal at a lunch-counter? What, in short, do the schools contribute to the creation of a taste for good literature?

Great anxiety is felt in many quarters about the modern novel. It is feared that it will not be realistic enough, that it will be too realistic, that it will be insincere as to the common aspects of life, that it will not sufficiently idealize life to keep itself within the limits of true art. But while the critics are busy saying what the novel should be, and attacking or defending the fiction of the previous age, the novel obeys pretty well the laws of its era, and in many ways, especially in the variety of its development, represents the time. Regarded simply as a work of art, it may be said that the novel should be an expression of the genius of its writer conscientiously applied to a study of the facts of life and of human nature, with little reference to the audience. Perhaps the great works of art that have endured have been so composed. We may say, for example, that *Don Quixote* had to create its sympathetic audience. But, on the other hand, works of art worthy the name are sometimes produced to suit a demand and to please a taste already created.

A great deal of what passes for literature in these days is in this category of supply to suit the demand, and perhaps it can be said of this generation more fitly than of any other that the novel seeks to hit the popular taste; having become a means of livelihood, it must sell in order to be profitable to the producer, and in order to sell it must be what the reading public want. The demand and sale are widely taken as the criterion of excellence, or they are at least sufficient encouragement of further work on the line of the success. This criterion is accepted by the publisher, whose business it is to supply a demand. The conscientious publisher asks two questions: Is the book good? and Will it sell? The publisher without a conscience asks only one question: Will the book sell? The reflex influence of this upon authors is immediately felt.

The novel, mediocre, banal, merely sensational, and worthless for any purpose of intellectual stimulus or elevation of the ideal, is thus encouraged in this age as it never was before. The making of novels has become a process of manufacture. Usually, after the fashion of the silk-weavers of Lyons, they are made for the central establishment on individ-



ual looms at home; but if demand for the sort of goods furnished at present continues, there is no reason why they should not be produced, even more cheaply than they are now, in great factories, where there can be division of labor and economy of talent. The shoal of English novels conscientiously reviewed every seventh day in the London weeklies would preserve their present character and gain in firmness of texture if they were made by machinery. One has only to mark what sort of novels reach the largest sale and are most called for in the circulating libraries, to gauge pretty accurately the public taste, and to measure the influence of this taste upon modern production. With the exception of the novel now and then which touches some religious problem or some socialistic speculation or uneasiness, or is a special freak of sensationalism, the novels which suit the greatest number of readers are those which move in a plane of absolute mediocrity, and have the slightest claim to be considered works of art. They represent the chromo stage of development.

They must be cheap. The almost universal habit of reading is a mark of this age—nowhere else so conspicuous as in America; and

considering the training of this comparatively new reading public, it is natural that it should insist upon cheapness of material, and that it should require quality less than quantity. It is a note of our general intellectual development that cheapness in literature is almost as much insisted on by the rich as by the poor. The taste for a good book has not kept pace with the taste for a good dinner, and multitudes who have commendable judgment about the table would think it a piece of extravagance to pay as much for a book as for a dinner, and would be ashamed to smoke a cigar that cost less than a novel. Indeed, we seem to be as yet far away from the appreciation of the truth that what we put into the mind is as important to our well-being as what we put into the stomach.

No doubt there are more people capable of appreciating a good book, and there are more good books read, in this age, than in any previous, though the ratio of good judges to the number who read is less; but we are considering the vast mass of the reading public and its tastes. I say its tastes, and probably this is not unfair, although this travelling, restless, reading public meekly takes, as in the case of the reading selected in the news-

papers, what is most persistently thrust upon its attention by the great news agencies, which find it most profitable to deal in that which is cheap and ephemeral. The houses which publish books of merit are at a disadvantage with the distributing agencies.

Criticism which condemns the common-school system as a nurse of superficiality, mediocrity, and conceit does not need serious attention, any more than does the criticism that the universal opportunity of individual welfare offered by a republic fails to make a perfect government. But this is not saying that the common school does all that it can do, and that its results answer to the theories about it. It must be partly due to the want of proper training in the public schools that there are so few readers of discrimination, and that the general taste, judged by the sort of books now read, is so mediocre. Most of the public schools teach reading, or have taught it, so poorly that the scholars who come from them cannot read easily; hence they must have spice, and blood, and vice to stimulate them, just as a man who has lost taste peppers his food. We need not agree with those who say that there is no merit whatever in the mere ability to read, nor, on the other hand, can we

join those who say that the art of reading will pretty surely encourage a taste for the nobler kind of reading, and that the habit of reading trash will by-and-by lead the reader to better things. As a matter of experience, the reader of the namby-pamby does not acquire an appetite for anything more virile, and the reader of the sensational requires constantly more highly flavored viands. Nor is it reasonable to expect good taste to be recovered by an indulgence in bad taste.

What, then, does the common school usually do for literary taste? Generally there is no thought about it. It is not in the minds of the majority of teachers, even if they possess it themselves. The business is to teach the pupils to read; how they shall use the art of reading is little considered. If we examine the reading-books from the lowest grade to the highest, we shall find that their object is to teach words, not literature. The lower-grade books are commonly inane (I will not say childish, for that is a libel on the open minds of children) beyond description. There is an impression that advanced readers have improved much in quality within a few years, and doubtless some of them do contain specimens of better literature than their predecessors. But

they are on the old plan, which must be radically modified or entirely cast aside, and doubtless will be when the new method is comprehended, and teachers are well enough furnished to cut loose from the machine. We may say that to learn how to read, and not what to read, is confessedly the object of these books; but even this object is not attained. There is an endeavor to teach how to call the words of a reading-book, but not to teach how to read; for reading involves, certainly for the older scholars, the combination of known words to form new ideas. This is lacking. The taste for good literature is not developed; the habit of continuous pursuit of a subject, with comprehension of its relations, is not acquired; and no conception is gained of the entirety of literature or its importance to human life. Consequently, there is no power of judgment or faculty of discrimination.

Now, this radical defect can be easily remedied if the school authorities only clearly apprehend one truth, and that is that the minds of children of tender age can be as readily interested and permanently interested in good literature as in the dreary feebleness of the juvenile reader. The mind of the ordinary child should not be judged by the mind that

produces stuff of this sort: "Little Jimmy had a little white pig." "Did the little pig know Jimmy?" "Yes, the little pig knew Jimmy, and would come when he called." "How did little Jimmy know his pig from the other little pigs?" "By the twist in his tail." ("Children," asks the teacher, "what is the meaning of 'twist'?") "Jimmy liked to stride the little pig's back." "Would the little pig let him?" "Yes, when he was absorbed eating his dinner." ("Children, what is the meaning of 'absorbed'?") And so on.

This intellectual exercise is, perhaps, read to children who have not got far enough in "word-building" to read themselves about little Jimmy and his absorbed pig. It may be continued, together with word-learning, until the children are able to say (is it reading?) the entire volume of this precious stuff. To what end? The children are only languidly interested; their minds are not awakened; the imagination is not appealed to; they have learned nothing, except probably some new words, which are learned as signs. Often children have only one book even of this sort, at which they are kept until they learn it through by heart, and they have been heard to "read" it with the book bottom side up or shut! All

these books cultivate inattention and intellectual vacancy. They are—the best of them—only reading exercises; and reading is not perceived to have any sort of value. The child is not taught to think, and not a step is taken in informing him of his relation to the world about him. His education is not begun.

Now it happens that children go on with this sort of reading and the ordinary textbooks through the grades of the district school into the high school, and come to the ages of seventeen and eighteen without the least conception of literature, or of art, or of the continuity of the relations of history; are ignorant of the great names which illuminate the ages; have never heard of Socrates, or of Phidias, or of Titian; do not know whether Franklin was an Englishman or an American; would be puzzled to say whether it was Ben Franklin or Ben Jonson who invented lightning—think it was Ben Somebody; cannot tell whether they lived before or after Christ, and indeed never have thought that anything happened before the time of Christ; do not know who was on the throne of Spain when Columbus discovered America—and so on. These are not imagined instances. The children referred to are in good circumstances

and have had fairly intelligent associations, but their education has been intrusted to the schools. They know nothing except their text-books, and they know these simply for the purpose of examination. Such pupils come to the age of eighteen with not only no taste for the best reading, for the reading of books, but without the ability to be interested even in fiction of the first class, because it is full of allusions that convey nothing to their minds. The stories they read, if they read at all—the novels, so called, that they have been brought up on—are the diluted and feeble fictions that flood the country, and that scarcely rise above the intellectual level of Jimmy and the absorbed pig.

It has been demonstrated by experiment that it is as easy to begin with good literature as with the sort of reading described. It makes little difference where the beginning is made. Any good book, any real book, is an open door into the wide field of literature; that is to say, of history—that is to say, of interest in the entire human race. Read to children of tender years, the same day, the story of Jimmy and a Greek myth, or an episode from the *Odyssey*, or any genuine bit of human nature and life; and ask the children



next day which they wish to hear again. Almost all of them will call for the repetition of the real thing, the verity of which they recognize, and which has appealed to their imaginations. But this is not all. If the subject is a Greek myth, they speedily come to comprehend its meaning, and by the aid of the teacher to trace its development elsewhere, to understand its historic significance, to have the mind filled with images of beauty and wonder. Is it the Homeric story of Nausicaa? What a picture! How speedily Greek history opens to the mind! How readily the children acquire knowledge of the great historic names, and see how their deeds and their thoughts are related to our deeds and our thoughts! It is as easy to know about Socrates as about Franklin and General Grant. Having the mind open to other times and to the significance of great men in history, how much more clearly they comprehend Franklin and Grant and Lincoln! Nor is this all. The young mind is open to noble thoughts, to high conceptions; it follows by association easily along the historic and literary line; and not only do great names and fine pieces of literature become familiar, but the meaning of the continual life in the world begins to be apprehended. This is

not at all a fancy sketch. The writer has seen the whole assembly of pupils in a school of six hundred, of all the eight grades, intelligently interested in a talk which contained classical and literary allusions that would have been incomprehensible to an ordinary school brought up on the ordinary readers and text-books.

But the reading need not be confined to the classics nor to the masterpieces of literature. Natural history—generally the most fascinating of subjects—can be taught; interest in flowers and trees and birds and the habits of animals can be awakened by reading the essays of literary men on these topics as they never can be by the dry text-books. The point I wish to make is that real literature for the young, literature which is almost absolutely neglected in the public schools, except in a scrappy way as a reading exercise, is the best open-door to the development of the mind and to knowledge of all sorts. The unfolding of a Greek myth leads directly to art, to love of beauty, to knowledge of history, to an understanding of ourselves. But whatever the beginning is, whether a classic myth, a Homeric epic, a play of Sophocles, the story of the life and death of Socrates, a mediæval legend, or

any genuine piece of literature from the time of Virgil down to our own, it may not so much matter (except that it is better to begin with the ancients in order to gain a proper perspective) — whatever the beginning is, it should be the best literature. The best is not too good for the youngest child. Simplicity, which commonly characterizes greatness, is of course essential. But never was a greater mistake made than in thinking that a youthful mind needs watering with the slops ordinarily fed to it. Even children in the kindergarten are eager for Whittier's *Barefoot Boy* and Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. It requires, I repeat, little more pains to create a good taste in reading than a bad taste.

It would seem that in the complete organization of the public schools all education of the pupil is turned over to them as it was not formerly, and it is possible that in the stress of text-book education there is no time for reading at home. The competent teachers contend not merely with the difficulty of the lack of books and the deficiencies of those in use, but with the more serious difficulty of the erroneous ideas of the function of text-books. They will cease to be a commercial commodity of so much value as now when teachers teach.

If it is true that there is no time for reading at home, we can account for the deplorable lack of taste in the great mass of the reading public educated at the common schools; and we can see exactly what the remedy should be—namely, the teaching of the literature at the beginning of school life, and following it up broadly and intelligently during the whole school period. It will not crowd out anything else, because it underlies everything. After many years of perversion and neglect, to take up the study of literature in a comprehensive text-book, as if it were to be learned like arithmetic, is a ludicrous proceeding. This is not teaching literature nor giving the scholar a love of good reading. It is merely stuffing the mind with names and dates, which are not seen to have any relation to present life, and which speedily fade out of the mind. The love of literature is not to be attained in this way, nor in any way except by reading the best literature.

The notion that literature can be taken up as a branch of education, and learned at the proper time and when studies permit, is one of the most farcical in our scheme of education. It is only matched in absurdity by the other current idea, that literature is some-

thing separate and apart from general knowledge. Here is the whole body of accumulated thought and experience of all the ages, which indeed forms our present life and explains it, existing partly in tradition and training, but more largely in books; and most teachers think, and most pupils are led to believe, that this most important former of the mind, maker of character, and guide to action can be acquired in a certain number of lessons out of a text-book! Because this is so, young men and young women come up to college almost absolutely ignorant of the history of their race and of the ideas that have made our civilization. Some of them have never read a book, except the text-books on the specialties in which they have prepared themselves for examination. We have a saying concerning people whose minds appear to be made up of dry, isolated facts, that they have no atmosphere. Well, literature is the atmosphere. In it we live, and move, and have our being, intellectually. The first lesson read to, or read by, the child should begin to put him in relation with the world and the thought of the world.

This cannot be done except by the living teacher. No text-book, no one reading book

or series of reading-books, will do it. If the teacher is only the text-book orally delivered, the teacher is an uninspired machine. We must revise our notions of the function of the teacher for the beginners. The teacher is to present evidence of truth, beauty, art. Where will he or she find it? Why, in experimental science, if you please, in history, but, in short, in good literature, using the word in its broadest sense. The object in selecting reading for children is to make it impossible for them to see any evidence except the best. That is the teacher's business, and how few understand their business! How few are educated! In the best literature we find truth about the world, about human nature; and hence, if children read that, they read what their experience will verify. I am told that publishers are largely at fault for the quality of the reading used in schools—that schools would gladly receive the good literature if they could get it. But I do not know, in this case, how much the demand has to do with the supply. I am certain, however, that educated teachers would use only the best means for forming the minds and enlightening the understanding of their pupils. It must be kept in mind that reading, silent reading done by the scholar,

is not learning signs and calling words; it is getting thought. If children are to get thought, they should be served with the best—that which will not only be true, but appeal so naturally to their minds that they will prefer it to all meaner stuff. If it is true that children cannot acquire this taste at home—and it is true for the vast majority of American children—then it must be given in the public schools. To give it is not to interrupt the acquisition of other knowledge; it is literally to open the door to all knowledge.

When this truth is recognized in the common schools, and literature is given its proper place, not only for the development of the mind, but as the most easily-opened door to history, art, science, general intelligence, we shall see the taste of the reading public in the United States undergo a mighty change. It will not care for the fiction it likes at present, and which does little more than enfeeble its powers; and then there can be no doubt that fiction will rise to supply the demand for something better. When the trash does not sell, the trash will not be produced, and those who are only capable of supplying the present demand will perhaps find a more useful occupation. It will be again evident that literature

is not a trade, but an art requiring peculiar powers and patient training. When people know how to read, authors will need to know how to write.

In all other pursuits we carefully study the relation of supply to demand. Why not in literature? Formerly, when readers were comparatively few, and were of a class that had leisure and the opportunity of cultivating the taste, books were generally written for this class, and aimed at its real or supposed capacities. If the age was coarse in speech or specially affected in manner, the books followed the lead given by the demand; but, coarse or affected, they had the quality of art demanded by the best existing cultivation. Naturally, when the art of reading is acquired by the great mass of the people, whose taste has not been cultivated, the supply for this increased demand will, more or less, follow the level of its intelligence. After our civil war there was a patriotic desire to commemorate the heroic sacrifices of our soldiers in monuments, and the deeds of our great captains in statues. This noble desire was not usually accompanied by artistic discrimination, and the land is filled with monuments and statues which express the gratitude of the



people. The coming age may wish to replace them by images and structures which will express gratitude and patriotism in a higher because more artistic form. In the matter of art the development is distinctly reflex. The exhibition of works of genius will slowly instruct and elevate the popular taste, and in time the cultivated popular taste will reject mediocrity and demand better things. Only a little while ago few people in the United States knew how to draw, and only a few could tell good drawing from bad. To realize the change that has taken place, we have only to recall the illustrations in books, magazines, and comic newspapers of less than a quarter of a century ago. Foreign travel, foreign study, and the importation of works of art (still blindly restricted by the American Congress) were the lessons that began to work a change. Now, in all our large towns, and even in hundreds of villages, there are well-established art schools; in the greater cities, unions and associations, under the guidance of skilful artists, where five or six hundred young men and women are diligently, day and night, learning the rudiments of art. The result is already apparent. Excellent drawing is seen in illustrations for books and magazines,

in the satirical and comic publications, even in the advertisements and theatrical posters. At our present rate of progress, the drawings in all our amusing weeklies will soon be as good as those in the *Fliegende Blätter*. The change is marvellous; and the popular taste has so improved that it would not be profitable to go back to the ill-drawn illustrations of twenty years ago. But as to fiction, even if the writers of it were all trained in it as an art, it is not so easy to lift the public taste to their artistic level. The best supply in this case will only very slowly affect the quality of the demand. When the poor novel sells vastly better than the good novel, the poor will be produced to supply the demand, the general taste will be still further lowered, and the power of discrimination fade out more and more. What is true of the novel is true of all other literature. Taste for it must be cultivated in childhood. The common schools must do for literature what the art schools are doing for art. Not every one can become an artist, not every one can become a writer—though this is contrary to general opinion; but knowledge to distinguish good drawing from bad can be acquired by most people, and there are probably few minds that cannot, by

right methods applied early, be led to prefer good literature, and to have an enjoyment in it in proportion to its sincerity, naturalness, verity, and truth to life.

It is, perhaps, too much to say that all the American novel needs for its development is an audience, but it is safe to say that an audience would greatly assist it. Evidence is on all sides of a fresh, new, wonderful artistic development in America in drawing, painting, sculpture, in instrumental music and singing, and in literature. The promise of this is not only in the climate, the free republican opportunity, the mixed races blending the traditions and aptitudes of so many civilizations, but it is in a certain temperament which we already recognize as American. It is an artistic tendency. This was first most noticeable in American women, to whom the art of dress seemed to come by nature, and the art of being agreeable to be easily acquired.

Already writers have arisen who illustrate this artistic tendency in novels, and especially in short stories. They have not appeared to owe their origin to any special literary centre; they have come forward in the South, the West, the East. Their writings have to a great degree (considering our pupilage to the

literature of Great Britain, which is prolonged by the lack of an international copyright) the stamp of originality, of naturalness, of sincerity, of an attempt to give the facts of life with a sense of their artistic value. Their affiliation is rather with the new literatures of France, of Russia, of Spain, than with the modern fiction of England. They have to compete in the market with the uncopyrighted literature of all other lands, good and bad, especially bad, which is sold for little more than the cost of the paper it is printed on, and badly printed at that. But besides this fact, and owing to a public taste not cultivated or not corrected in the public schools, their books do not sell in anything like the quantity that the inferior, mediocre, other home novels sell. Indeed, but for the intervention of the magazines, few of the best writers of novels and short stories could earn as much as the day laborer earns. In sixty millions of people, all of whom are, or have been, in reach of the common school, it must be confessed that their audience is small.

This relation between the fiction that is, and that which is to be, and the common school is not fanciful. The lack in the general reading public, in the novels read by the greater

number of people, and in the common school is the same—the lack of inspiration and ideality. The common school does not cultivate the literary sense, the general public lacks literary discrimination, and the stories and tales either produced by or addressed to those who have little ideality simply respond to the demand of the times.

It is already evident, both in positive and negative results, both in the schools and the general public taste, that literature cannot be set aside in the scheme of education; nay, that it is of the first importance. The teacher must be able to inspire the pupil; not only to awaken eagerness to know, but to kindle the imagination. The value of the Hindoo or the Greek myth, of the Roman story, of the mediæval legend, of the heroic epic, of the lyric poem, of the classic biography, of any genuine piece of literature, ancient or modern, is not in the knowledge of it as we may know the rules of grammar and arithmetic or the formulas of a science, but in the enlargement of the mind to a conception of the life and development of the race, to a study of the motives of human action, to a comprehension of history; so that the mind is not simply enriched, but becomes discriminating, and

able to estimate the value of events and opinions. This office for the mind acquaintance with literature can alone perform. So that, in school, literature is not only, as I have said, the easiest open-door to all else desirable, the best literature is not only the best means of awakening the young mind, the stimulus most congenial, but it is the best foundation for broad and generous culture. Indeed, without its co-ordinating influence the education of the common school is a thing of shreds and patches. Besides, the mind aroused to historic consciousness, kindled in itself by the best that has been said and done in all ages, is more apt in the pursuit, intelligently, of any specialty; so that the shortest road to the practical education so much insisted on in these days begins in the awakening of the faculties in the manner described. There is no doubt of the value of manual training as an aid in giving definiteness, directness, exactness to the mind, but mere technical training alone will be barren of those results, in general discriminating culture, which we hope to see in America.

The common school is a machine of incalculable value. It is not, however, automatic. If it is a mere machine, it will do little more

to lift the nation than the mere ability to read will lift it. It can easily be made to inculcate a taste for good literature; it can be a powerful influence in teaching the American people what to read; and upon a broadened, elevated, discriminating public taste depends the fate of American art, of American fiction.

It is not an inappropriate corollary to be drawn from this that an elevated public taste will bring about a truer estimate of the value of a genuine literary product. An invention which increases or cheapens the conveniences or comforts of life may be a fortune to its originator. A book which amuses, or consoles, or inspires; which contributes to the highest intellectual enjoyment of hundreds of thousands of people; which furnishes substance for thought or for conversation; which dispels the cares and lightens the burdens of life; which is a friend when friends fail, a companion when other intercourse wearies or is impossible, for a year, for a decade, for a generation perhaps, in a world which has a proper sense of values, will bring a like competence to its author.





A NIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF THE  
TUILERIES



## A NIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF THE TUILERIES

It was in the time of the Second Empire. To be exact, it was the night of the 18th of June, 1868; I remember the date, because, contrary to the astronomical theory of short nights at this season, this was the longest night I ever saw. It was the loveliest time of the year in Paris, when one was tempted to lounge all day in the gardens and to give to sleep none of the balmy nights in this gay capital, where the night was illuminated like the day, and some new pleasure or delight always led along the sparkling hours. Any day the Garden of the Tuileries was a microcosm repaying study. There idle Paris sunned itself; through it the promenaders flowed from the Rue de Rivoli gate by the palace to the entrance on the Place de la Concorde, out to the Champs-Élysées and back again; here in the north grove gathered thousands to hear the regimental band in the afternoon;

children chased butterflies about the flower-beds and amid the tubs of orange-trees; travellers, guide-book in hand, stood resolutely and incredulously before the groups of statuary, wondering what that Infant was doing with the snakes and why the recumbent figure of the Nile should have so many children climbing over him; or watched the long façade of the palace hour after hour, in the hope of catching at some window the flutter of a royal robe; and swarthy, turbaned Zouaves, erect, lithe, *insouciant*, with the firm, springy step of the tiger, lounged along the allées.

Napoleon was at home—a fact attested by a reversal of the hospitable rule of democracy, no visitors being admitted to the palace when he was at home. The private garden, close to the imperial residence, was also closed to the public, who in vain looked across the sunken fence to the parterres, fountains, and statues, in the hope that the mysterious man would come out there and publicly enjoy himself. But he never came, though I have no doubt that he looked out of the windows upon the beautiful garden and his happy Parisians, upon the groves of horse-chestnuts, the needle-like fountain be-

yond, the Column of Luxor, up the famous and shining vista terminated by the Arch of the Star, and reflected with Christian complacency upon the greatness of a monarch who was the lord of such splendors and the goodness of a ruler who opened them all to his children. Especially when the western sunshine streamed down over it all, turning even the dust of the atmosphere into gold and emblazoning the windows of the Tuileries with a sort of historic glory, his heart must have swelled within him in throbs of imperial exaltation. It is the fashion nowadays not to consider him a great man, but no one pretends to measure his goodness.

The public garden of the Tuileries was closed at dusk, no one being permitted to remain in it after dark. I suppose it was not safe to trust the Parisians in the covert of its shades after nightfall, and no one could tell what foreign fanatics and assassins might do if they were permitted to pass the night so near the imperial residence. At any rate, everybody was drummed out before the twilight fairly began, and at the most fascinating hour for dreaming in the ancient garden. After sundown the great door of the Pavillon de l'Horloge swung open and

there issued from it a drum-corps, which marched across the private garden and down the broad allée of the public garden, drumming as if the Judgment-day were at hand, straight to the great gate of the Place de la Concorde, and returning by a side allée, beating up every covert and filling all the air with clamor until it disappeared, still thumping, into the court of the palace; and all the square seemed to ache with the sound. Never was there such pounding since Thackeray's old Pierre, who, "just to keep up his drumming, one day drummed down the Bastille":

At midnight I beat the tattoo,  
And woke up the Pikemen of Paris  
To follow the bold Barbaroux.

On the waves of this drumming the people poured out from every gate of the garden, until the last loiterer passed and the gendarmes closed the portals for the night. Before the lamps were lighted along the Rue de Rivoli and in the great square of the Revolution, the garden was left to the silence of its statues and its thousand memories. I often used to wonder, as I looked through the iron railing at nightfall, what might go on there and

whether historic shades might not flit about in the ghostly walks.

Late in the afternoon of the 18th of June, after a long walk through the galleries of the Louvre, and excessively weary, I sat down to rest on a secluded bench in the southern grove of the garden, hidden from view by the tree-trunks. Where I sat I could see the old men and children in that sunny flower-garden, La Petite Provence, and I could see the great fountain-basin facing the Porte du Pont-Tournant. I must have heard the evening drumming, which was the signal for me to quit the garden; for I suppose even the dead in Paris hear that and are sensitive to the throb of the glory-calling drum. But if I did hear it, it was only like an echo of the past, and I did not heed it any more than Napoleon in his tomb at the Invalides heeds, through the drawn curtain, the chanting of the daily mass. Overcome with fatigue, I must have slept soundly.

When I awoke it was dark under the trees. I started up and went into the broad promenade. The garden was deserted; I could hear the splash of the fountains, but no other sound therein. Lights were gleaming from the windows of the Tuileries, lights blazed

along the Rue de Rivoli, dotted the great Square, and glowed for miles up the Champs-Élysées. There were the steady roar of wheels and the tramping of feet without, but within was the stillness of death.

What should I do? I am not naturally nervous, but to be caught lurking in the Tuileries Garden in the night would involve me in the gravest peril. The simple way would have been to have gone to the gate nearest the Pavillon de Marsan, and said to the policeman on duty there that I had inadvertently fallen asleep, that I was usually a wide-awake citizen of the land that Lafayette went to save, that I wanted my dinner, and would like to get out. I walked down near enough to the gate to see the policeman, but my courage failed. Before I could stammer out half that explanation to him in his trifling language (which foreigners are mockingly told is the best in the world for conversation), he would either have slipped his hateful rapier through my body, or have raised an alarm and called out the guards of the palace to hunt me down like a rabbit.

A man in the Tuileries Garden at night! an assassin! a conspirator! one of the Carbonari, perhaps a dozen of them—who knows?—



Orsini bombs, gunpowder, Greek-fire, Polish refugees, murder, *émancipes*, REVOLUTION!

No, I'm not going to speak to that person in the cocked hat and dress-coat under these circumstances. Conversation with him out of the best phrase-books would be uninteresting. Diplomatic row between the two countries would be the least dreaded result of it. A suspected conspirator against the life of Napoleon, without a chance for explanation, I saw myself clubbed, gagged, bound, searched (my minute notes of the Tuileries confiscated), and trundled off to the Conciergerie, and hung up to the ceiling in an iron cage there, like Ravallac.

I drew back into the shade and rapidly walked to the western gate. It was closed, of course. On the gate-piers stand the winged steeds of Marly, never less admired than by me at that moment. They interested me less than a group of the Corps d'Afrique, who lounged outside, guarding the entrance from the square, and unsuspecting that any assassin was trying to get out. I could see the gleam of the lamps on their bayonets and hear their soft tread. Ask them to let me out? How nimbly they would have scaled the fence and transfixed me! They like to do such things.

No, no — whatever I do, I must keep away from the clutches of these cats of Africa.

And enough there was to do, if I had been in a mind to do it. All the seats to sit in, all the statuary to inspect, all the flowers to smell. The southern terrace overlooking the Seine was closed, or I might have amused myself with the toy railway of the Prince Imperial that ran nearly the whole length of it, with its switches and turnouts and houses; or I might have passed delightful hours there watching the lights along the river and the blazing illumination on the amusement halls. But I ascended the familiar northern terrace and wandered amid its bowers, in company with Hercules, Meleager, and other worthies I knew only by sight, smelling the orange-blossoms, and trying to fix the site of the old riding-school where the National Assembly sat in 1789.

It must have been eleven o'clock when I found myself down by the private garden next the palace. Many of the lights in the offices of the household had been extinguished, but the private apartments of the Emperor in the wing south of the central pavilion were still illuminated. The Emperor evidently had not so much desire to go to bed as I had. I knew

the windows of his *petits appartements*—as what good American did not?—and I wondered if he was just then taking a little supper, if he had bidden good-night to Eugénie, if he was alone in his room, reflecting upon his grandeur and thinking what suit he should wear on the morrow in his ride to the Bois. Perhaps he was dictating an editorial for the official journal; perhaps he was according an interview to the correspondent of the London *Glorifier*; perhaps one of the Abbots was with him. Or was he composing one of those important love-letters of state to Madame Blank which have since delighted the lovers of literature? I am not a spy, and I scorn to look into people's windows late at night, but I was lonesome and hungry, and all that square round about swarmed with imperial guards, policemen, keen-scented Zouaves, and nobody knows what other suspicious folk. If Napoleon had known that there was a

#### MAN IN THE GARDEN!

I suppose he would have called up his family, waked the drum corps, sent for the Prefect of Police, put on the alert the *sergents de ville*, ordered under arms a regiment of the Imperial Guards, and made it unpleasant for the Man.

All these thoughts passed through my mind, not with the rapidity of lightning, as is usual in such cases, but with the slowness of conviction. If I should be discovered, death would only stare me in the face about a minute. If he waited five minutes, who would believe my story of going to sleep and not hearing the drums? And if it were true, why didn't I go at once to the gate, and not lurk round there all night like another Clément? And then I wondered if it was not the disagreeable habit of some night-patrol or other to beat round the garden before the Sire went to bed for good, to find just such characters as I was gradually getting to feel myself to be.

But nobody came. Twelve o'clock, one o'clock sounded from the tower of the church of St.-Germain-l'Auxerrois, from whose bell-fry the signal was given for the beginning of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew—the same bells that tolled all that dreadful night while the slaughter went on, while the effeminate Charles IX. fired from the windows of the Louvre upon stray fugitives on the quay—bells the reminiscent sound of which, a legend (which I fear is not true) says, at length drove Catharine de' Medici from the Tuileries.

One o'clock! The lights were going out

in the Tuileries, had nearly all gone out. I wondered if the suspicious and timid and wasteful Emperor would keep the gas burning all night in his room. The night-roar of Paris still went on, sounding always to foreign ears like the beginning of a revolution. As I stood there, looking at the window that interested me most, the curtains were drawn, the window was opened, and a form appeared in a white robe. I had never seen the Emperor before in a night-gown, but I should have known him among a thousand. The Man of Destiny had on a white cotton night-cap, with a peaked top and no tassel. It was the most natural thing in the world; he was taking a last look over his restless Paris before he turned in. What if he should see *me*! I respected that last look and withdrew into the shadow. Tired and hungry, I sat down to reflect upon the pleasures of the gay capital.

One o'clock and a half! I had presence of mind enough to wind my watch; indeed, I was not likely to forget that, for time hung heavily on my hands. It *was* a gay capital. Would it never put out its lights, and cease its uproar, and leave me to my reflections? In less than an hour the country legions would invade the city, the market-wagons would rumble down

the streets, the vegetable-man and the strawberry-woman, the fishmongers and the greens-venders would begin their melodious cries, and there would be no repose for a man even in a public garden. It is secluded enough, with the gates locked, and there is plenty of room to turn over and change position; but it is a wakeful situation at the best, a haunting sort of place, and I was not sure it was not haunted.

I had often wondered, as I strolled about the place in the daytime or peered through the iron fence at dusk, if strange things did not go on here at night, with this crowd of effigies of persons historical and more or less mythological, in this garden peopled with the representatives of the dead, and no doubt by the shades of kings and queens and courtiers, *intrigantes* and panders, priests and soldiers, who lived once in this old pile—real shades, which are always invisible in the sunlight. They have local attachments, I suppose. Can science tell *when* they depart forever from the scenes of their objective intrusion into the affairs of this world, or how long they are permitted to revisit them? Is it true that in certain spiritual states, say of isolation or intense nervous alertness, we can see them as they can see each other?

There was I—the I catalogued in the police description—present in that garden, yet so earnestly longing to be somewhere else that would it be wonderful if my *eidolon* was somewhere else and could be seen?—though not by a policeman, for policemen have no spiritual vision.

There were no policemen in the garden, that I was certain of; but a little after half-past one I saw a Man, not a man I had ever seen before, clad in doublet and hose, with a short cloak and a felt cap with a white plume, come out of the Pavillon de Flore and turn down the quay towards the house—I had seen that afternoon where it stood—of the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées. I might have been mistaken but for the fact that, just at this moment, a window opened in the wing of the same pavilion, and an effeminate, boyish face, weak and cruel, with a crown on its head, appeared and looked down into the shadow of the building as if its owner saw what I had seen. And there was nothing remarkable in this, except that nowadays kings do not wear crowns at night. It occurred to me that there was a masquerade going on in the Tuileries, though I heard no music, except the tinkle of, it might be, a harp, or “the lascivious pleasing of a

lute," and I walked along down towards the central pavilion. I was just in time to see two ladies emerge from it and disappear, whispering together, in the shrubbery; the one old, tall, and dark, with the Italian complexion, in a black robe, and the other young, *petite*, extraordinarily handsome, and clad in light and bridal stuffs, yet both with the same wily look that set me thinking on poisons, and with a grace and a subtle carriage of deceit that could be common only to mother and daughter. I didn't choose to walk any farther in the part of the garden they had chosen for a night promenade, and turned off abruptly.

What?

There, on the bench of the marble hemicycle in the north grove, sat a row of gray-beards, old men in the costume of the first Revolution, a sort of serene and benignant Arcopagus. In the cleared space before them were a crowd of youths and maidens, spectators and participants in the Floral Games which were about to commence; behind the old men stood attendants who bore chaplets of flowers, the prizes in the games. The young men wore short red tunics with copper belts, formerly worn by Roman lads at the *ludi*, and the girls tunics of white with loos-



ened girdles, leaving their limbs unrestrained for dancing, leaping, or running; their hair was confined only by a fillet about the head. The pipers began to play and the dancers to move in rhythmic measures, with the slow and languid grace of those full of sweet wine and the new joy of the Spring, according to the habits of the Golden Age, which had come again by decree in Paris. This was the beginning of the classic sports, but it is not possible for a modern pen to describe particularly the Floral Games. I remember that the Convention ordered the placing of these hemicycles in the garden, and they were executed from Robespierre's designs; but I suppose I am the only person who ever saw the games played that were expected to be played before them. It was a curious coincidence that the little livid-green man was also there, leaning against a tree and looking on with a half sneer. It seemed to me an odd classic revival, but then Paris has spasms of that, at the old Théâtre Français and elsewhere.

Pipes in the garden, lutes in the palace, paganism, Revolution — the situation was becoming mixed, and I should not have been surprised at a ghostly procession from the Place de la Concorde, through the western

gates, of the thousands of headless nobility, victims of the axe and the basket; but, thank Heaven, nothing of that sort appeared to add to the wonders of the night; yet, as I turned a moment from the dancers, I thought I saw something move in the shrubbery. The Laocoön? It could not be. The arms moving? Yes. As I drew nearer the arms distinctly moved, putting away at length the coiling serpent, and pushing from the pedestal the old-men boys, his comrades in agony. Laocoön shut his mouth, which had been stretched open for about eighteen centuries, untwisted the last coil of the snake, and stepped down, a free man. After this it did not surprise me to see Spartacus also step down and approach him, and the two ancients square off for fisticuffs, as if they had done it often before, enjoying at night the release from the everlasting pillory of art. It was the hour of releases, and I found myself in a moment in the midst of a "classic revival," whimsical beyond description. Æneas hastened to deposit his aged father in a heap on the gravel and ran after the Sylvan Nymphs; Theseus gave the Minotaur a respite; Themistocles was bending over the dying Spartan, who was coming to life; Venus Pudica was waltzing about the diagonal

basin with Antinous; Ascanius was playing marbles with the infant Hercules. In this unreal phantasmagoria it was a relief to me to see walking in the area of the private garden two men: the one a stately person with a kingly air, a handsome face, his head covered with a huge wig that fell upon his shoulders; the other a farmer-like man, stout and ungracious, the counterpart of the pictures of the intendant Colbert. He was pointing up to the palace, and seemed to be speaking of some alterations, to which talk the other listened impatiently. I wondered what Napoleon, who by this time was probably dreaming of Mexico, would have said if he had looked out and seen, not one man in the garden, but dozens of men, and all the stir that I saw; if he had known, indeed, that the Great Monarch was walking under his windows.

I said it was a relief to me to see two real men, but I had no reason to complain of solitude thereafter till daybreak. That any one saw or noticed me I doubt, and I soon became so reassured that I had more delight than fear in watching the coming and going of personages I had supposed dead a hundred years and more; the appearance at windows of faces lovely, faces sad, faces terror-stricken; the

opening of casements and the dropping of billets into the garden; the flutter of disappearing robes; the faint sounds of revels from the interior of the palace; the hurrying of feet, the flashing of lights, the clink of steel, that told of partings and sudden armings, and the presence of a king that will be denied at no doors. I saw through the windows of the long Galerie de Diane the *roués* of the Regency at supper, and at table with them a dark, semi-barbarian little man in a coat of Russian sable, the coolest head in Europe at a drinking-bout. I saw enter the south pavilion a tall lady in black, with the air of a royal procuress; and presently crossed the garden and disappeared in the pavilion a young Parisian girl, and then another and another, a flock of innocents, and I thought instantly of the dreadful Parc aux Cerfs at Versailles.

So wrought upon was I by the sight of this infamy that I scarcely noticed the incoming of a royal train at the southern end of the palace, and notably in it a lady with light hair and noble mien, and the look in her face of a hunted lioness at bay. I say scarcely, for hardly had the royal cortège passed within, when there arose a great clamor in the inner court, like the roar of an

angry multitude, a scuffling of many feet, firing of guns, thrusting of pikes, followed by yells of defiance in mingled French and German, the pitching of Swiss Guards from doorways and windows, and the flashing of flambeaux that ran hither and thither. "Oho!" I said, "Paris has come to call upon its sovereign; the pikemen of Paris, led by the bold Barbaroux."

The tumult subsided as suddenly as it had risen, hushed. I imagined, by the jarring of cannon from the direction of St.-Roch; and in the quiet I saw a little soldier alight at the Rue de Rivoli gate—a little man whom you might mistake for a corporal of the guard—with a wild, coarse featured Corsican (say, rather, Basque) face, his disordered chestnut hair darkened to black locks by the use of pomatum—a face selfish and false, but determined as fate. So this was the beginning of the Napoleon "legend"; and by-and-by this coarse head will be idealized into the Roman Emperor type, in which I myself might have believed but for the revelations of the night of strange adventure.

What *is* history? What is this drama and spectacle, that has been put forth as history, but a cover for petty intrigue, and deceit, and

selfishness, and cruelty? A man shut into the Tuileries Garden begins to think that it is all an illusion, the trick of a disordered fancy. Who was Grand, who was Well-Beloved, who was Desired, who was the Idol of the French, who was worthy to be called a King of the Citizens? Oh for the light of day!

And it came, faint and tremulous, touching the terraces of the palace and the Column of Luxor. But what procession was that moving along the southern terrace? A squad of the National Guard on horseback, a score or so of King's officers, a King on foot, walking with uncertain step, a Queen leaning on his arm, both habited in black, moved out of the western gate. The King and the Queen paused a moment on the very spot where Louis XVI. was beheaded, and then got into a carriage drawn by one horse and were driven rapidly along the quays in the direction of St.-Cloud. And again Revolution, on the heels of the fugitives, poured into the old palace and filled it with its tatterdemalions.

Enough for me that daylight began to broaden. "Sleep on," I said, "O real President, real Emperor (by the grace of *coup d'état*) at last, in the midst of the most virt-

nous court in Europe, loved of good Americans, eternally established in the hearts of your devoted Parisians! Peace to the palace and peace to its lovely garden, of both of which I have had quite enough for one night!"

The sun came up, and, as I looked about, all the shades and concourse of the night had vanished. Day had begun in the vast city, with all its roar and tumult; but the garden gates would not open till seven, and I must not be seen before the early stragglers should enter and give me a chance of escape. In my circumstances I would rather be the first to enter than the first to go out in the morning, past those lynx-eyed gendarmes. From my covert I eagerly watched for my coming deliverers. The first to appear was a *chiffonnier*, who threw his sack and pick down by the basin, bathed his face, and drank from his hand. It seemed to me almost like an act of worship, and I would have embraced that rag-picker as a brother. But I knew that such a proceeding, in the name even of *égalité* and *fraternité* would have been misinterpreted; and I waited till two and three and a dozen entered by this gate and that, and I was at full liberty to stretch my limbs and

walk out upon the quay as nonchalant as if I had been taking a morning stroll.

I have reason to believe that the police of Paris never knew where I spent the night of the 18th of June. It must have mystified them.

(1872.)

THE END









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